COMMODORE User

December 1985 Price 95p

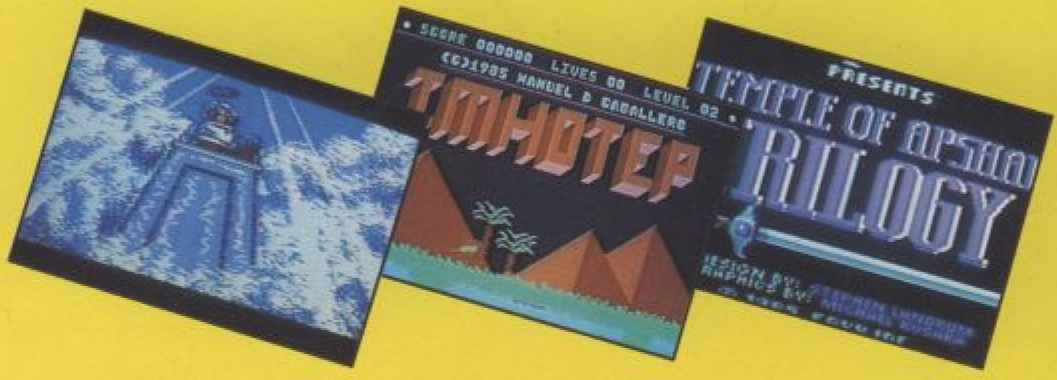
win JEFF CAPES
STRONG MAN GAMES



JOYSTICK ROUNDUP

TYPE IN XMAS CAROL

BIGGER REVIEWS



50 LORD OF THE RINGS GAMES TO BE WON


LORD OF THE RINGS
GAME ONE
AT LAST! The eagerly awaited sequel to the fabulous classic "The Hobbit" is now available. "The Hobbit", classed as 'the ultimate adventure game of all time', was just a taste of what you can expect in LORD OF THE RINGS.
Astonishing vocabulary, graphics and more locations than you could imagine possible!
LORD OF THE RINGS Game 1 is available on C64, BBC, Spectrum and Amstrad at £15.95. This stunning package includes two cassettes, large booklet and a copy of "The Lord of the Rings" Part 1.
MELBOURNE HOUSE

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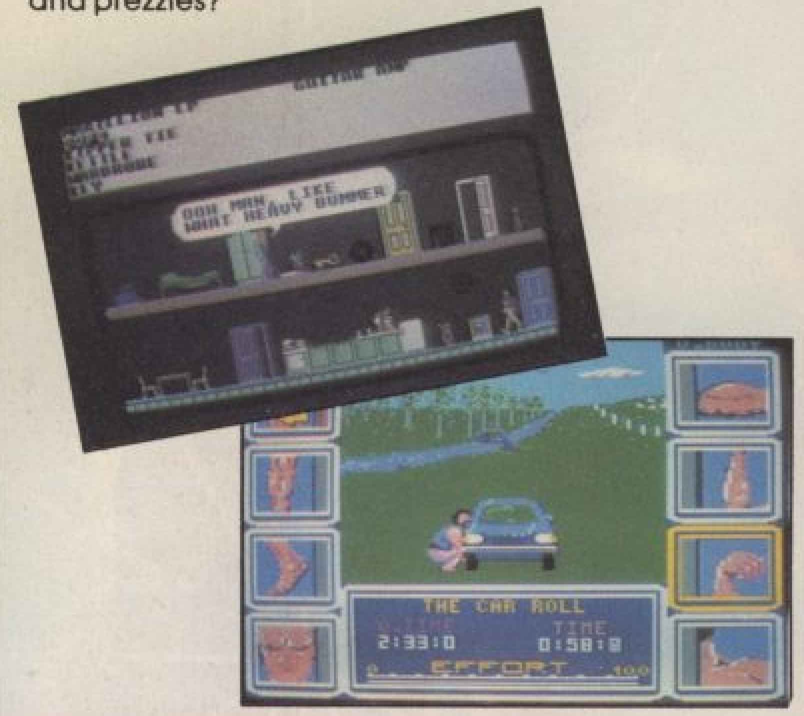
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PEOPLE

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MEMBER OF THE AUDIT BUREAU OF CIRCULATIONS

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128 Software

Now that the 128 has finally reached the shop-window, a steady stream of software is following. The newest arrival is a complete assembler and program development system from JCL Software.

By the time it reaches you the program will probably be sporting Commodore's own packaging and be disk based. No prices have been thrashed out yet, though.

The assembler includes a full editor, bi-directional scrolling, and search/replace function. And the good news for Basic buffs is that you can use all these when writing Basic too.

Also available from the same company will be a *Business Basic* extension. Sounds weird, but it's a by-product of the 128 *Micro Clerk* retail accounts package JCL wrote for Commodore (for £100 you get cash accounts, a filing system, a wordprocessor, spreadsheet, calculator, cut and paste, and mailmerge).

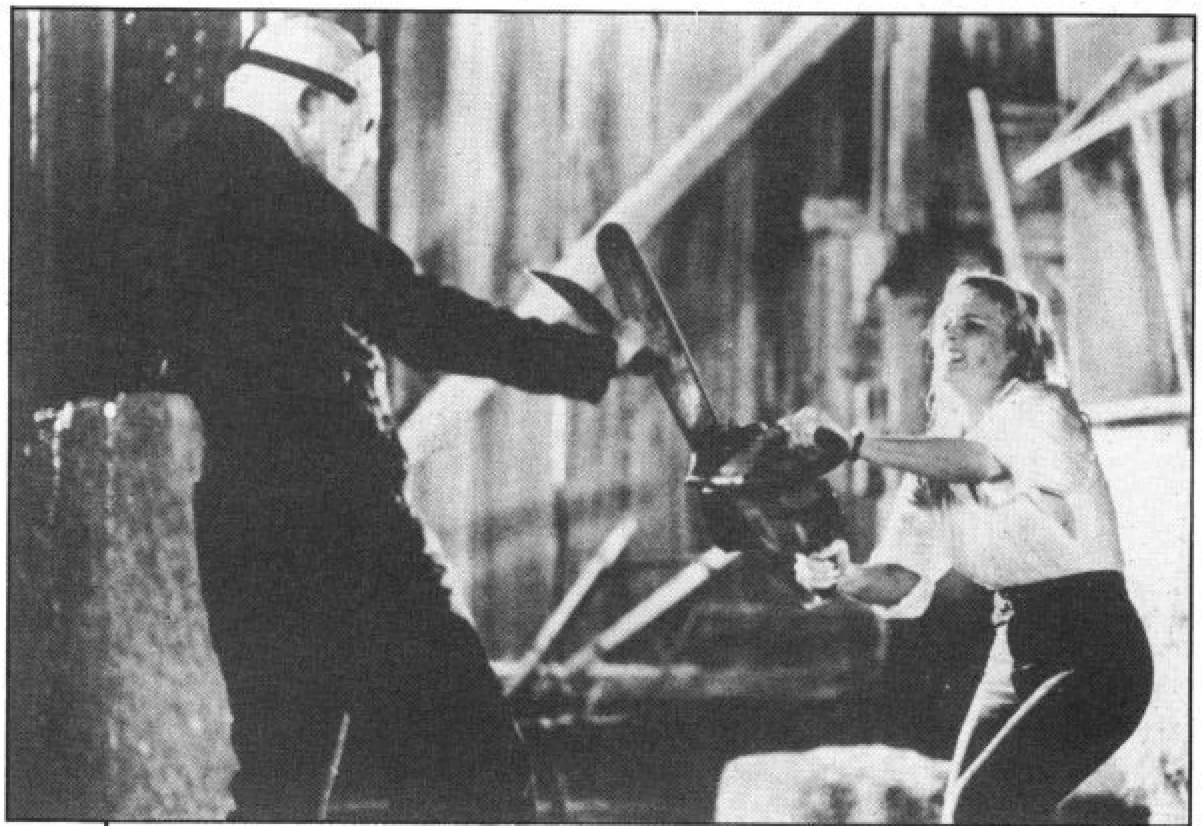
Business Basic gives you commands to make functions like data input, file management and file indexing more easier to program. So if you don't like the packages on the shelves, you can go and write your own. Again, no prices yet.

• SHORTS •

Radio 16: Good news for all those Commodore 64 users who were miffed at missing out on our recent Radio Hams series; Scotland-based Moray Micros has announced *Microcom 16*, a morse and RTTY receive and transmit program for the humble 16 (remember you must have a licence to transmit). The program also doubles as a morse code tutor to Amateur Radio Licence standards. The tape costs £14.95 (£16.95 on disk) and, bearing in mind that you can now acquire a 16 for around £50 it looks like a nice 'n cheap way of getting on the air. Moray is on 05427 384.

• SHORTS •

Parts and Labour: Following our Repair feature in the October issue, hardware repairers have been falling over themselves to tell us about their service. Here's the gen from Bradford-based *Trilogic* They offer a 'standard' repair service for the Commodore 64 costing £27.50. That includes parts, labour and postage — and you should get your machine back within 5 days. For speedier repairs with same day despatch, they'll charge you £34.50. Trilogic say both services are subject to the availability of spares. A 17p stamp gets you their free catalogue. Write to Trilogic, 29 Holme Lane, Bradford BD4 0QA.



• SHORTS •

Airborne Software: Are you a simulation, strategic and war game nut? Apparently, you're not alone. According to *Airborne Software*, there's such a lot of people flying planes, racing cars, fighting wars (all on screen) that it's set up a special mail-order company to sell this type of software. It claims to have not only the expertise but a large selection of software. You can get more info and a price-list by writing to: Airborne Software, PO Box 1940, Watford, Herts WD5 0DL.

Software nasty

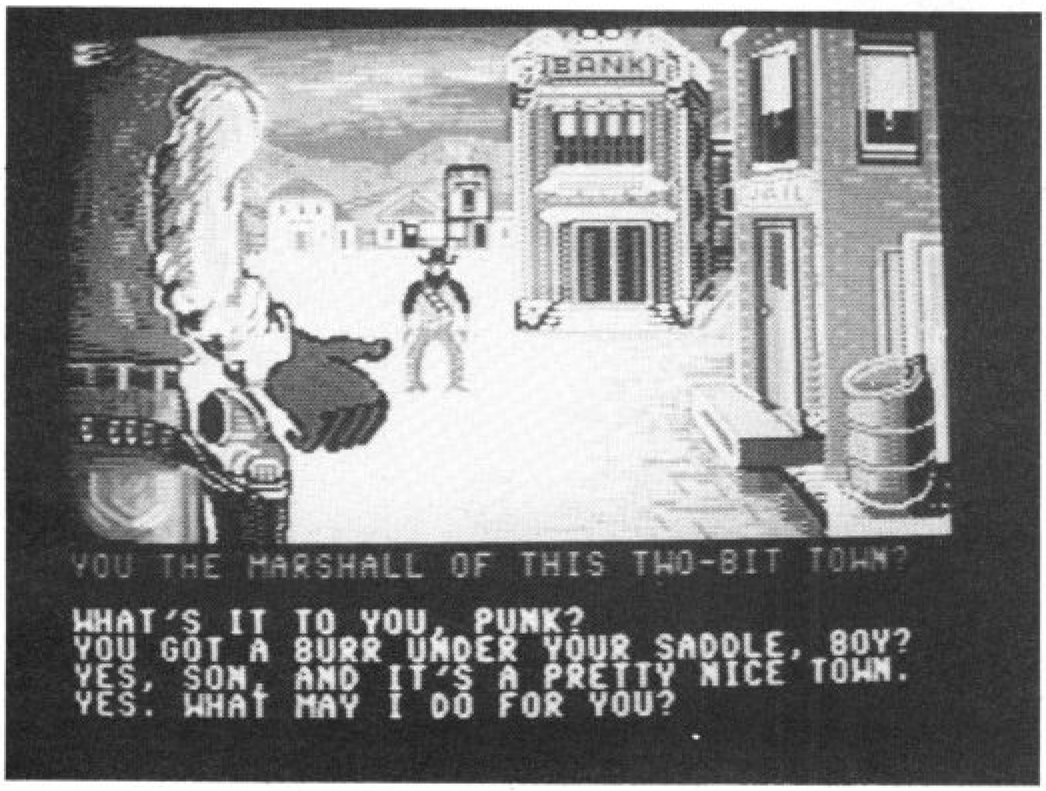
You'd better lock all the doors and nail the windows down, because Domark have secured the licence for Friday 13th. A game is due in time for Christmas based on the crazed exploits of a man who goes round topping spotty American teenagers. Sounds ace, eh?

Domark's approach though, is "Not to shock, but surprise". Mark Strachan explained the theory. "People like to be frightened, but not horrified. We intend to keep the surpise edge-of-the-seat element in this game without making it disturbing."

The game will be a straightforward arcade challenge with you trying to save ten teenagers from the clutches of the warped Jason. Trouble is you don't know which one Jason is. Ten weapons are at your disposal to do away with the man in the hockey mask, through five levels.

The game priced at £8.95 cassette and £10.95 disk contains a surprise gift and offers you the chance to win a monitor by identifying the chilling sounds that can be played from the cassette on an audio tape player . . .

Sounds creepy.



Accolade for US Gold

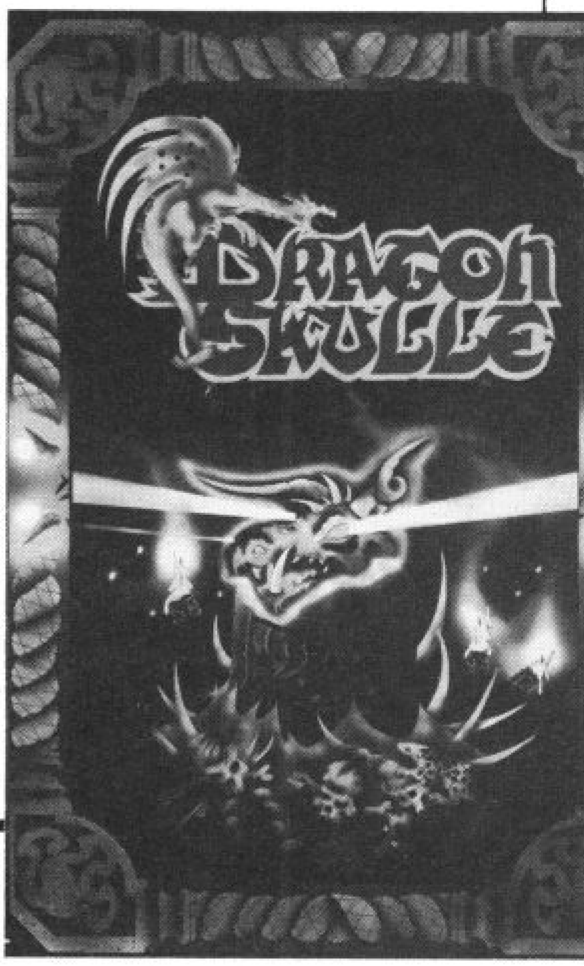
US Gold's latest American acquisition is Accolade Inc, a breakaway group of programmers from Activision.

The company's first release is *Hardball*, a baseball simulation due in January, to be followed shortly afterwards by a spaceship strategy game entitled *The Psi-5 Trading Company*, and a gunslinging game called *Law of the West*.

As the screen shot demonstrates, we are not talking about cheapo arcade games. The graphics are large and detailed, with quality animation.

The latter two games feature language in the shape of adventure style screen printing which require you to interact with other characters. The Wild West game, for example, features a nice line in dry humour which requires you to combine with various townspeople to ward off the scourge of roving bandidos and desperados. Your job as the sheriff is to be diplomatic as well as fast on the draw.

We'll be reviewing these titles just as fast as we can slap leather, pardners.



Ultimate names the games

Ultimate, creators of the Arthur Pendragon series, have announced the release of two new games for the Commodore 64. *Dragon Skulle* and *Outlaws* will both be available in time to make a letter to Santa a worthwhile bet. At £9.95 each you should stand a good chance of finding one in your Christmas stocking.

In typical tight-lipped fashion, Ultimate are keeping quiet about the details, so stay tuned for a full review in January.

MUD delayed by bugs

Multi User Dungeons — the extremely hip adventure game that lots of people can play simultaneously with a modem — has now been delayed.

It was due to go on-line on Bonfire Night but the organisers now say it will not be available until early next year.

MUD's organisers, British Telecom, have written to subscribers to explain the delay as "the kind of last-minute bugs every programmer has to cope with". BT are determined to get all the bugs sorted out before MUD goes online. A spokesman told *Commodore User* "As far as we're concerned the quality of the final product is more important than the deadline".

MUD is generating a lot of interest at the moment. What sets it apart from other computer games is that you are playing simultaneously against or with several other Mudders. You may even come up against the odd celebrity — well, Jeff Minter anyway.

• Shorts •

Dialog Software, the company responsible for the popular *Transact* book-keeping package, is bundling its entire 64 range of programs at a bargain-basement price. For £75 you get *Transact* itself, *Sales Ledger* and invoice processor, *Purchase Ledger*, *Stock-Aid* control system and the *Home Accounts* manager. According to Dialog's Chris Ely, the set would cost around £155 separately, "which must represent remarkable value for the user". Of course, the true value depends on how many of the modules you actually need. The whole lot comes on a single disk with appropriate documentation for each program. More details on 0371 831009.

• Shorts •

Video Darts: When it's closing time and you still want to play darts, Zion Systems may have the answer. They've just produced the *Video Darts* game for the Commodore 64. It's for one or two players and costs £7.95. Armchair Eric Bristows can contact Zion on 0252 521123.

OCTOBER COMPETITION RESULTS

FAMOUS NAMES COMPETITION: Caught most of you out on this one: shame on you, not being able to tell the difference between Bobby and Jack Charlton — simple, Bobby's got a shinier cranium (and scored more goals) Ten sharp-eyed winners were:
William Yau of Halesowen, Gary Wesley of Southampton, Jonathan Wright of Humberside, Mark Evans of Belfast, Richard Hamling of Caerphilly, Mark Laurence of Derby, Paul Murphy of North Shields, Steve Wood of Womborne, Andrew Clarke of Warwickshire and Hank Jones of Clwyd.

CASTLE COMPETITION: Pretty simple this one — the answer was 'portmanteau'. Prizes are already winging their way to:
Valerie Bishai in Egypt, Michael Croft of Sussex, David Porter of Aberdeen, Michael Herne of County Kerry and Arthur O'Sullivan of County Mayo.

BOXING COMPETITION: A hush falls round the ring as the judges confer. Looks like a decision on points. But wait, a shock result, only 25 knock-out champs managed to win the 30 prizes on offer. Now it's over to Harry Carpenter to announce the winners:
Douglas Latif of London, David Wilson of Durham, Paul Serbert of Harrogate, Nadeem Afzal of Rochdale, R. Pickard of Clwyd, Les Ward of Liverpool, Cy Redman of W. Croydon, Steve Wood of Staffs, Chris Garbutt of Basildon, Mohamed Şamoọ of Walsall, Mark Wilson of South Shields, J. Tunstall of Hartlepool, Stuart Sambrook of Shrewsbury, Anthony Grogan of Accrington, Cornell Rogers of Neasden, T. Leitch of Glasgow, Craig Burton of Bournemouth, Ibrahim El Abidein of the Netherlands, David Constable of Bedford, James Gibb of Strathclyde, David Wesley of Southampton, W. Hay of Tyne and Wear, Miss M. Sellings of Eastbourne, Andrew Clarke of Warwickshire and John Thorneycroft of Epping.

DIY Adventure Blunder

Apologies to those of you who typed in the "Phantom of Priory Court" game in our DIY Adventure series (October and November issues) — you did, didn't you? A poltergeist ran off with part of the listing. Well, actually, we accidentally missed out the final section of the program, so here it is: just tag it on to the listing you've already got using the line numbers presented here. Whilst you type it in, we'll all go and stand in a corner.

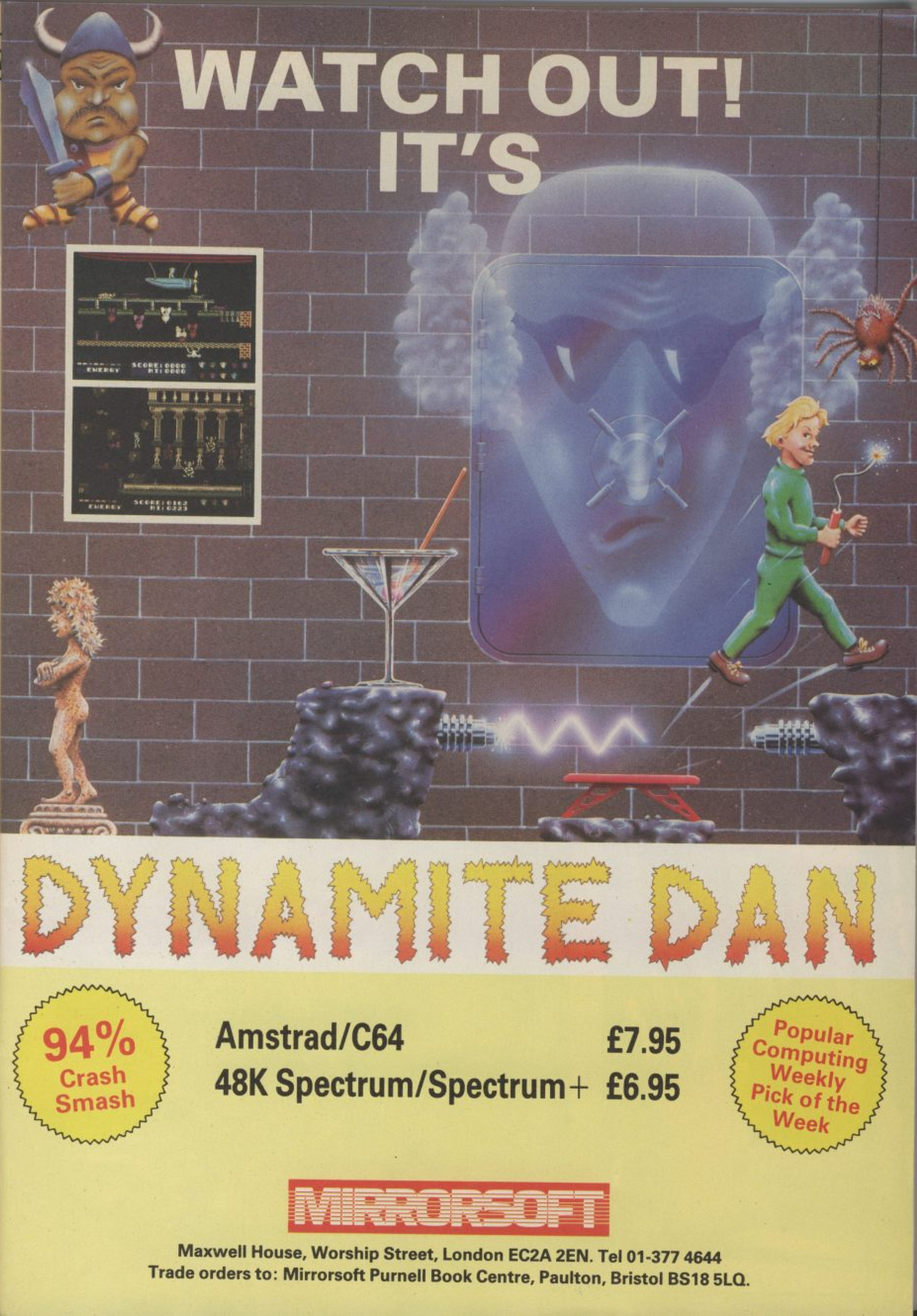
```
3600 REM***PRINT APPROPRIATE CHALLENGE***
3610 :
3620 PRINT"ANNOYINGLY, THE NEW C128 APPEARS NOT TO WORK.":GOTO 1740
3630 PRINT"THE WATER'S POISONED - YOU GROW DIZZY!":GOTO 1740
3640 PRINT"A HOMOCIDAL CHEF POUNCES ON YOU!":GOTO 1740
3650 PRINT"IT IS TOO DARK TO SEE ANYTHING.":GOTO 1740
3660 :
3670 REM***SUCCESS ROUTINE***
3680 :
3690 PRINT"CONGRATULATIONS!!!"
3700 PRINT"THE DETECTION PROGRAM RUNS TO REVEAL"
3710 PRINT"THAT THE HAVOC HAS BEEN CAUSED BY"
3720 PRINT"A DISGRUNTLED VALLEY READER"
3730 PRINT"WHO HASN'T YET WON A COMPETITION!"
3740 GOTO 3770
3750 :
3760 REM***WRAP-UP ROUTINE***
3770 PRINT CHR$(13)
3780 PRINT"YOU HAVE REACHED THE END OF THIS"
3790 PRINT"ATTEMPT TO FIND THE PHANTOM."
3800 PRINT"WOULD YOU LIKE ANOTHER TRY?"
3810 INPUT I$
3820 IF I$ = "Y" THEN RUN
3830 END
```

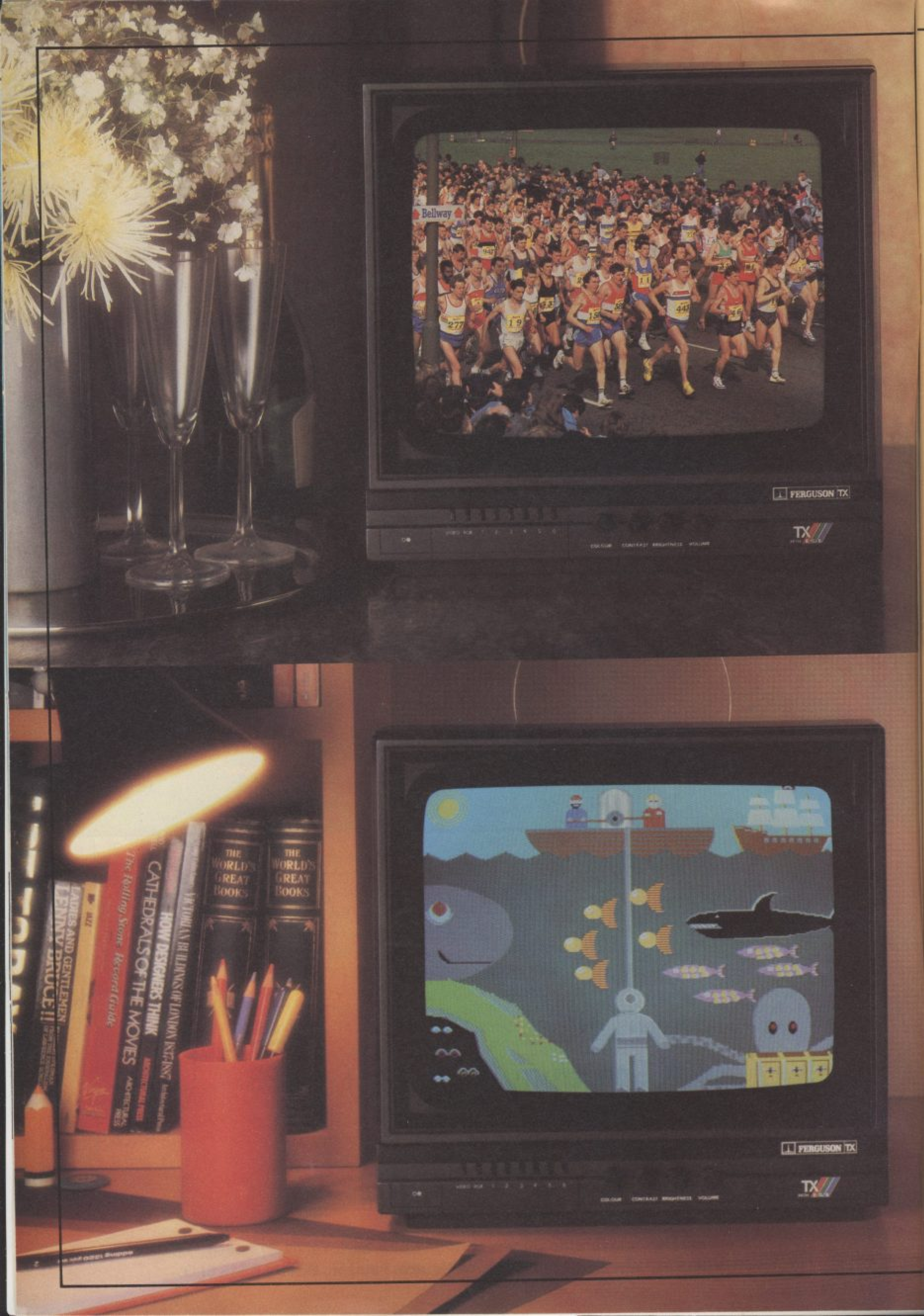
• SHORTS •

Book for Simon: For those of you who've done battle with Simon's Basic but haven't fathomed its full potential yet, there's a new book out to help you. Called *Commodore's Handbook of Simon's Basic* it's a 250-page reference book that should tell you all you ever wanted (and didn't want) to know. Being an American import, it's a wee bit expensive at £11.80. More details from Prentice-Hall on 0442 58531.

• SHORTS •

Microscribe: Just when you thought lightpens for the 64 were dead and buried, up pops another one. This one's called the *Amicron Microscribe*, distributed by Mirrorsoft. It comes complete with drawing software, on-screen calculator and programming routine. The bad news first: it costs £29.95. Good news is that the pen is very accurate and stable. And the not-so-good news: the drawing software is nothing to shout about. There you go, a mini-review in the 'Shorts' section.


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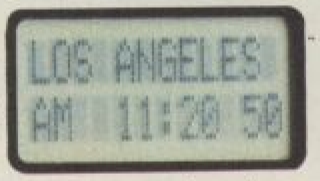


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The Rolling Stone Record Guide
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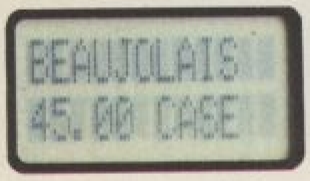
The greatest breakthrough in wrist technology since Seiko introduced quartz.



Have you ever forgotten an appointment, the price of a product, or even your own anniversary? Not any more. The new Seiko RC-1000 Wrist Terminal will change all that, permanently.

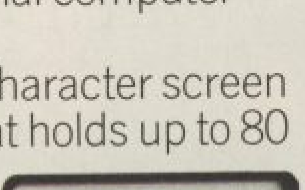


Only Seiko's advanced micro electronics technology could have produced the RC-1000. It is in fact, a computer terminal:



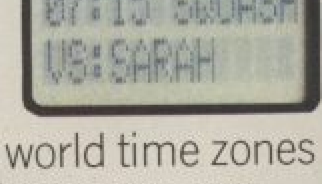
miniaturised then fitted into a small stylish module to be worn on your wrist like a watch, ready to recall important data from your personal computer* any time, anywhere.

The RC-1000 has a 24 character screen and an extensive memory that holds up to 80 screen 'pages' of information that can be sub-divided into 12 separate data files. A detachable lead allows it

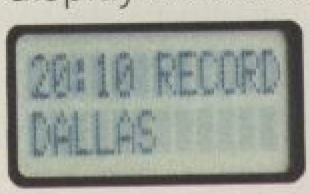


to interface to the RS232 port of your computer and a sophisticated menu-driven database allows you swift access to your files.

Now imagine what the RC-1000 could do for you. As an 'electronic notebook', you can keep addresses, prices, statistics, in fact any type of file, ready to recall at the touch of a button. The



memory also keeps track of world time zones — vital for international business; you can display schedule reminders that can be used



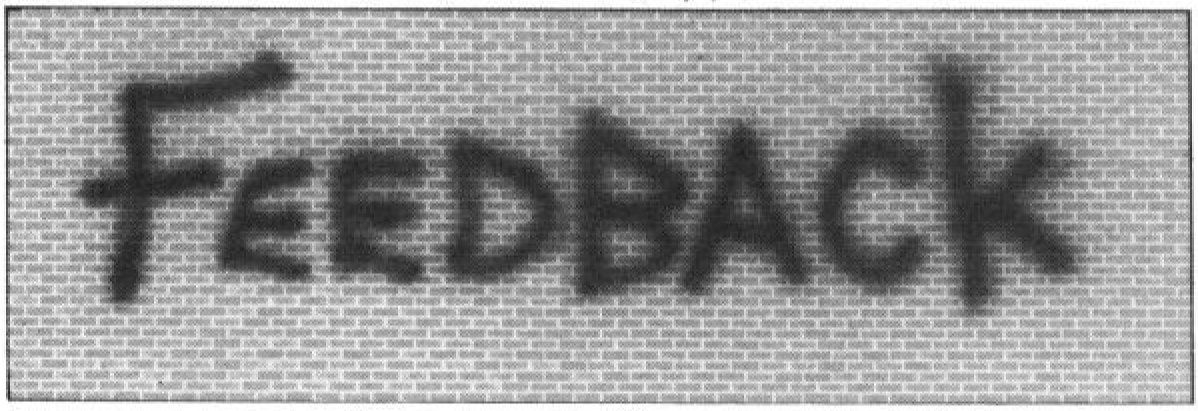
with the alarm function up to a year in advance (good for birthdays); or set to repeat at the same time every week. The list of uses is as endless as your busy timetable. The computer has revolutionised working lives. Now let the RC-1000 revolutionise your life.

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Lost in space

Dear Commodore User,
I have a Commodore 64 and have for the past year, been hunting for a copy of one of the first arcade games, "Space Invaders". I'm sure you will know the game I refer to, green aliens and 'thump, thump' sound effects, however, I have been unsuccessful so far. I was wondering if you could supply me with an address where I could obtain a copy, or perhaps another reader has a copy which they are prepared to sell or swap.

Thanking you for a favourable reply.

P.S.—Just finished reading *The Talisman* by Steven King and Peter Straub. Excellent material for a new adventure.

C.J. Hart,
7 Rossland Crescent,
Bishopton,
Renfrewshire PA7 5JH.

You've got us stumped. There were plenty of Space Invaders clones for the 64, but we can't think of one with that particular name. Can anybody out there help?

In praise of peripherals

Dear Commodore User,
Did you read the letters page in the November isue of Zzap 64? (*who on earth could be bothered to do that? — Ed.*) One of their readers complained about the boring reviews of peripherals he finds in *Commodore User*. I felt I had to write and say there is more to the Commodore 64 than using it just to play games. This sort of blinkered attitude really annoys me.

I can't afford most of the new products you review in the magazine but I do enjoy reading about them just to keep up with what's happening and what advances are being made both in hardware and software technology.

Playing games is great fun but I try to do other things with my 64 too. I've just bought the Commodore modem and am now getting hooked on Compunet. I'd like to do many more things with my 64, if I had enough money. Keep up the good work.

J. Wilson,
Welwyn Garden City.

Cuthbert clones

Dear Commodore User,
I recently purchased a copy of *Cuthbert in the Cooler* from Microdeal, hoping that it would be as good as the other two Cuthbert games for the C16. At first I found it quite good, but it is pretty much the same as *Cuthbert Enters the Tombs of Doom*. The walls are exactly the same only darker, and the screens repeat. For instance, screen 1, 11, 21, 31, 41, 51 etc. are all the same as are the two's, threes, fours and so on.

This didn't bother me though, but when I played it on the dragon, it was a totally different game. Instead of running around planting time bombs and getting keys, you had to run around a war camp in WWII getting keys, papers and then dodging land mines to escape to a ferry to freedom. The Dragon version had 97% in the Cuthbert Chronicle, and I doubt the C16 could get 20%.

So a message to C16 owners — don't be mislead by titles, always (if possible) try the games before buying them, then you can be sure to get good software.

H. Jenkins,
Caerleon,
Gwent.

Review with a moral

Dear Commodore User,
In September's edition I read with interest your review of the *Quickdisk+* Cartridge. I also noted in another magazine an advert was surely great enough to warrant an interest by the Advertising Standards Authority.

The ad on the Quickdisk+ stated the following:- "Fast LOAD and SAVE (four to five times normal speed)". Your reviewer wrote, "At best the Quickdisk+ matches the claimed fourfold increase". Four to Five?, not quite.

The "AND SAVE" was underlined, to emphasise a speed up in SAVEing time. But again your reviewer wrote, "At best the Quickdisk+ offered no reduction in time taken to SAVE a file to disk".

The ad said, "Fast Format takes just ten seconds". Your reviewer wrote, "The TEN sec disk formatter takes TWENTY seconds".

The ad said that Quickdisk+ woulds not copy Heavily Protected software. Your reviewer noted that it would not copy ANY protected software.

Blatant lies or just stretching the truth a little? Come on Evesham Micro Centre, surely you can do better than that.

The moral of this story must be to read the reviews before you buy.

R.J. Bruinsma,
Peterhead.

We'll go along with that.

C-16 software

Dear Commodore User,
I am the proud owner of a Commodore 16, and I was furious to say the least after reading your September feedback page to find even your excellent magazine knocking the C16's range of software.

In my town I can walk into almost any computer shop and pick up almost any game from *Steve Davies' Snooker* to *Daley Thompson's Star Events*.

I think you're wrong in saying there aren't many games being released, it's just a matter of going out and looking for them.

Nicholas Jones,
77 Priory Oak,
Brackla,
Bridgend,
Mid. Glamorgan,
S. Wales CF31 2HZ.

I think you'll find that we weren't slagging the C16 but merely saying it's software is limited compared to the 64. An indisputable fact.

Chart for C16

Dear Commodore User,
I agree with Michael Medlicott from Stirchley that you should have a C16 Software Chart because the C16 has got about 100 games; isn't that enough? Also why don't *Firebird* make some games for the C16? Lastly why don't they make games for expanded C16?

James Taylor,
Chatham,
Kent.

Hot Shots!

Ah, Christmas. Drink, pressies, colds, goodwill to all men. Well you can forget the last bit! The worms don't stop coming out of the woodwork for the Feast of Stephen. There will be no Christmas truce!

But first, I will apologise. Yes, I'm not too big for that yet. I failed to give **Chris Harvey**, Elite's 64 graphics programmer, the credit he was due for his work on *Frank Bruno*. Sorry about that, Chris.

Now for a legal update on **Elite vs Alligata** — hang on a sec whilst I put on my wig. Contrary to rumours in other publications, *Who Dares Wins* is available, or should I say *Who Dares Wins II* or is it *III*? After numerous program changes the game has gone out. To quote Alligata's Mike Mahoney, "There are no further possibilities of interruptions from Elite." Elite's case for infringement of rights still stands and will come to court eventually. According to Mahoney, Alligata meanwhile are claiming damages to the tune of £80,000. Neither, though, has passed secrets on to the Russians . . .

This follows nicely on to an ironic tale of mayhem. What did I say back in October about the game of the film? Well, now we've finally gone full circle, as I predicted, and have the film of the game. *Commando* is a Rambo clone just released in the US featuring Arnold Schwarzeneger as the efficient slab of killing machinery. **Commando** is, of course, the title of Elite's latest game (reviewed next month) which is making all the problems for Alligata. Steve Wilcox must be doing back flips of delight . . .

Beyond has been sold. 'We knew that!' you cry. But did you know that buyers British Telecom (i.e. **Firebird**) coughed up £600,000 for it? Thought not. Bet you're sorry you bought shares now aren't you? I suppose you didn't have a clue that there was a staff attempt to put up the money for the sale which was beaten off. Thought not . . .

You may or may not have heard that Melbourne House's **Terrormolinos** is causing a fuss because of its similarity to a text only mail order adventure called **Benidorm** which appeared a couple of years ago. Ray Carney, head of software house *Little Softie*, rang us to complain about our publicising it (along with dozens of other mags). If he is justified, and that would be hard to prove, there's not a lot he can do about it. You can't copyright an idea.



Ian Strachan discusses the possibility of budget cuts at Domark before the release of **Friday 13th**. An agreement was soon reached.

System 3 have also been on to me since I wrote about their escapades at the PCW show. A spokesperson rang me to whinge that the programmer's fee was incorrect. He tried to fob me off with lots of nice image gossip about Mark Kale being mobbed by schoolkids and wishing to present a respectable image to the industry. Their game *Twister Mother of Charlotte* was in fact *Mother of Harlot* but this was thought too strong, hence the change. Yawn, I think I'll stick to rumours. Apparently, according to spokesperson **Lesley Bundon**, System 3 are rating their own software like films. I hope they don't all end up with a **PG** tag because, as everybody knows, this means Pathetic Game . . .

Whilst at the photo shoot before his appearance in Splash at Thames TV, **Geoff Capes** walked straight up to me and pinched me very hard on the nipple. "Just remember", he informed me, "That's one of the most painful things you can do to anybody." Thanks for the lesson Geoff.

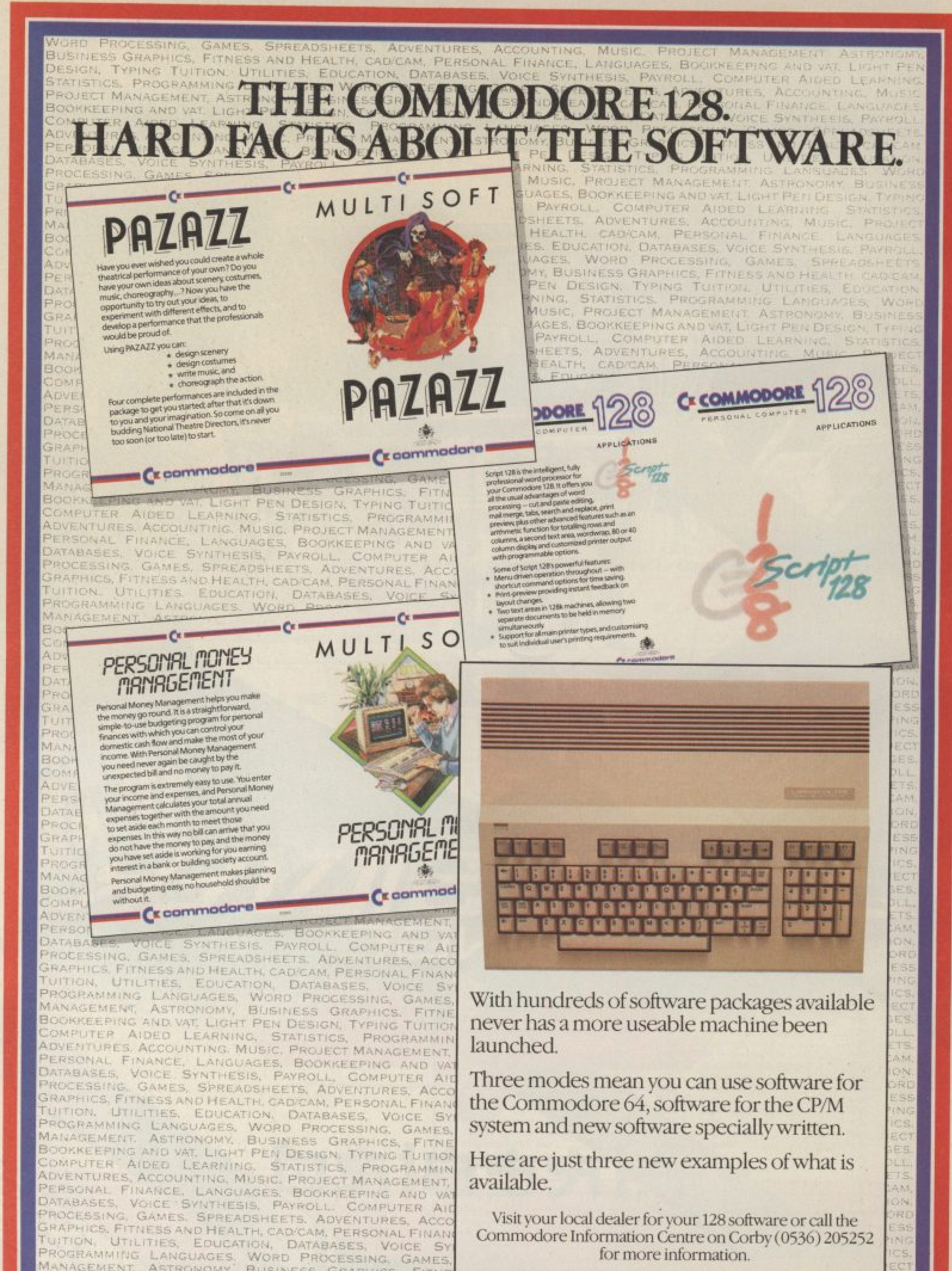
Don't expect another philanthropic **Soft Aid-style** compilation on the shelves in the near future as has been reported in other publications. Amstrad and BBC versions *may* become available, but nothing else is planned.

This boxing craze in the software business is going a bit too far. Probe man **Fergus McGovern** recently sustained a fractured rib in the ring.

Well, have a merry Christmas and don't forget to send me a pressie. ©

Here's a picture from the front. It comes from the Combat Zone, in fact, and captures the victorious Reds in action. A team of hand-picked EMAP employees overcame the imperialist might of CRL who were auditioning for a part in their Bladerunner *game. During an ignominious day, CRL's Ian Ellery managed to shoot himself in the hand and fail to conquer the heart of the fair maiden in the picture beneath me, sorry, I mean in front of me.*





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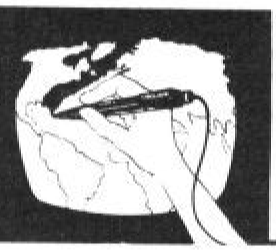
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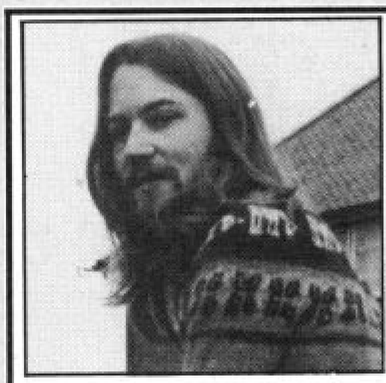
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XMAS WITH THE STARS

We thought you might like to know what programmers get up to at Christmas so we fired off a few questionnaires. The answer seemed to be booze, but there were a few other revelations as well.



JEFF MINTER: Owns an obscure company called Llamasoft, who currently have a surprise hit with a game entitled *Batalyx!*

CU: Do you like Christmas and if so why?
JM: Yes, because it allows me to stuff my face a lot.
CU: What are you doing this Christmas?
JM: I'm going skiing in the Alps with Tony Crowther.
CU: What do you want for Christmas?
JM: An Amiga, but that'll arrive early because I'm on Commodore's developers list. I want a copy of Electronic Arts' *Marvel Madness*, because it's my all-time favourite game. Otherwise anything hairy will do.
CU: What's your favourite Christmas food?
JM: The whole thing, I love the traditional Christmas dinner.
CU: Do you watch the Queen's speech?
JM: Never, I'm far too busy drinking or playing games.
CU: Do you believe in Father Christmas?
JM: Only as an abstract entity.
CU: What was your worst ever Christmas experience?
JM: I haven't had any. Christmas is wonderful.
CU: What was your best ever Christmas present?
JM: They've all been good.
CU: Who would you most like to kiss under the mistletoe?
JM: A camel I met in Tenerife last year.
CU: Tell us a Christmas joke.
JM: Oh, dear, er, um, I really don't know any. Sorry.



MIKE SINGLETON: Freelance programmer for Beyond, responsible for *Lords of Midnight* and *Quake Minus One*.

CU: Do you like Christmas and why?
MS: Yes I love it, especially snowball fights.
CU: What are you doing for Christmas?
MS: Having a holiday, i.e. not programming!
CU: What do you want for Christmas?
MS: Oh, a Cray I, I think, it's probably the fastest computer in the world. Somehow I don't think I'll get it though. I quite fancy getting the Superman game and maybe a Ferrari as well. I'm not being greedy, am I?
CU: What's your favourite Christmas food?
MS: Turkey — dull but true.
CU: Do you watch the Queen's speech?
MS: Not if I can help it.
CU: Do you believe in Santa Claus?
MS: Yes!
CU: What was your worst ever Christmas experience?
MS: I haven't had any, they're all wonderful.
CU: What was your best ever Christmas present?
MS: A plastic castle complete with soldiers, when I was four.
CU: Who would you most like to kiss under the mistletoe?
MS: Susan George. She's getting on, but so am I.
CU: Tell us a Christmas joke.
MS: What kind of parties do snowmen go to? Snowballs (er, thanks Mike).



TONY CROWTHER: *Loco, Monty Mole* and *Black Thunder* programmer, now owner of Wizard Development, currently in the charts with *William Wobbler*.

CU: Do you like Christmas and if so why?
TC: Yes, because it makes me stop working.
CU: What are you doing for Christmas?
TC: Ask Jeff Minter!
CU: What do you want for Christmas?
TC: Certainly not a computer or a game of any description. A bit of peace and quiet will do me very nicely.
CU: What's your favourite Christmas food?
TC: Mince pies, I hate turkey.
CU: Do you believe in Santa Claus?
TC: Of course not.
CU: Do you watch the Queen's speech?
TC: I didn't even know she gave one!
CU: What was your worst Christmas experience?
TC: Getting a 64, it took over my life.
CU: What was your best ever Christmas present?
TC: Getting engaged to Lisa (aahhh!).
CU: Who would you most like to kiss under the mistletoe and don't say Lisa because that's too creepy.
TC: Well if I'm forced to, I'll say Madonna.
CU: Tell us a Christmas joke?
TC: Oh no! Er, what do you get if you cross a shark with a block of ice? Frostbite! (A really duff cracker joke that one.)



WILD BILL STEALEY: Boss of Microprose — *Solo Flight*, *F15 Strike Eagle* and, coming soon, *Silent Service*.

CU: Do you like Christmas?
WB: I love it.
CU: What are you doing for Christmas?
WB: Every year I dress up as Santa Claus and give presents to my kids and employees at Microprose.
CU: What do you want for Christmas?
WB: A new aeroplane. I'm trying to talk my wife into buying a Monie R21 — it's a great low altitude fun plane.
CU: What's your favourite Christmas food?
WB: Rum nut cake (Dundee cake to you lot).
CU: Do you believe in Father Christmas?
WB: I believe in the spirit of Father Christmas. My biggest problem is trying to stop Wild Bill Junior from telling his ten-year-old sister that Santa is really me.
CU: What was your worst Christmas experience?
WB: It was when I was in the Air Force, on service in Turkey . . . I really missed my family.
CU: What was your best ever Christmas present?
WB: A chemistry set and a kit radio — I managed to receive the BBC.
CU: Who would you most like to kiss under the mistletoe?
WB: I can't answer that, my wife's in the other room *(v. loud Wild Bill laughter)*. **I'd just like to have the guts to give someone a really good kiss.**



TONY POMFRETT: Ocean programmer, responsible for *Roland Rat*, currently working on *Rambo*.

CU: Do you like Christmas?
TP: Yes, because it's a good excuse for drinking a lot.
CU: What are you doing this Christmas?
TP: Lying in bed, watching Jason and the Argonauts.
CU: What do you want for Christmas?
TP: An Amiga (surprise). I'd like a good *Star Wars* conversion if anyone's listening — oh, and also a personal harem.
CU: What's your favourite Christmas food?
TP: Christmas pud with lots of brandy all over it.
CU: Do you believe in Santa Claus?
TP: Absolutely, I've seen him loads of times.
CU: Do you watch the Queen's speech?
TP: No, it bores me to tears.
CU: What was your worst Christmas experience?
TP: My house burnt down on Boxing Day a few years ago!
CU: What was your best ever Christmas present?
TP: A Commodore Pet which I got when I was 13.
CU: Who would you most like to kiss under the mistletoe?
TP: Victoria Principal (Pammie from Dallas).
CU: Tell us a Christmas joke.
TP: What do you get when you cross an octopus with a turkey? I don't know, but there's a leg for all the family!



NEIL A BATE & CHRIS HARVEY: Elite programmers, responsible for *Airwolf*, *Frank Bruno* and currently *Commando*.



CU: Do you like Christmas and if so why?
NB: Yes, it means going to parties, getting drunk and having a good laugh at things like the Two Ronnies, Spectrums and games by Tony Crowther.
CU: What are you doing for Christmas?
NB: Sending people I don't like cheapo cards with robins on.
CU: What do you want for Christmas?
NB: A pair of socks — that way I won't be disappointed.
CU: What's your favourite Christmas food?
NB: Those little liqueur thingies.
CU: Do you believe in Father Christmas?
NB: Yes, but I'm sick of socks.
CU: Do you watch the Queen's speech?
NB: Yes, but I wish she would tell a few jokes.
CU: What was your worst Christmas experience?
NB: Last year when I tried to watch 'James Bond' and 'Raiders of the Lost Aark' simultaneously.
CU: What was your best ever Christmas present?
NB: A board game called 'Haunted House' by Palitoy.
CU: Who would you most like to kiss under the mistletoe?
NB: Princess Diana.
CU: Tell us a Christmas joke.
NB: What did Mrs. Christmas say to Father Christmas? "It looks like rain deer."

CU: Do you like Christmas? Give reason for yes/no.
CH: No, because the BBC have stopped showing 'The Wizard of Oz'.
CU: What are you doing for Christmas?
CH: Watching pirate videos of 'The Wizard of Oz'.
CU: What do you want for Christmas?
CH: An 'I Robot' game.
CU: What's your favourite Christmas food?
CH: Lager.
CU: Do you believe in Father Christmas?
CH: Yes, but he looks surprisingly like my dad.
CU: Do you watch the Queen's speech?
CH: No!
CU: What was your favourite Christmas experience?
CH: Last year, when someone bought be a Spectrum *(spit — traitor)*.
CU: What was your best ever Christmas present?
CH: Full sized table football game (impressed?).
CU: Who would you most like to kiss under the mistletoe?
CH: Cathrine Oxenburg (Amanda Carrington from Dynasty).
CU: Tell us a Christmas joke.
CH: There are only 25 letters in the alphabet. Noel Noel No-el No-'L'.

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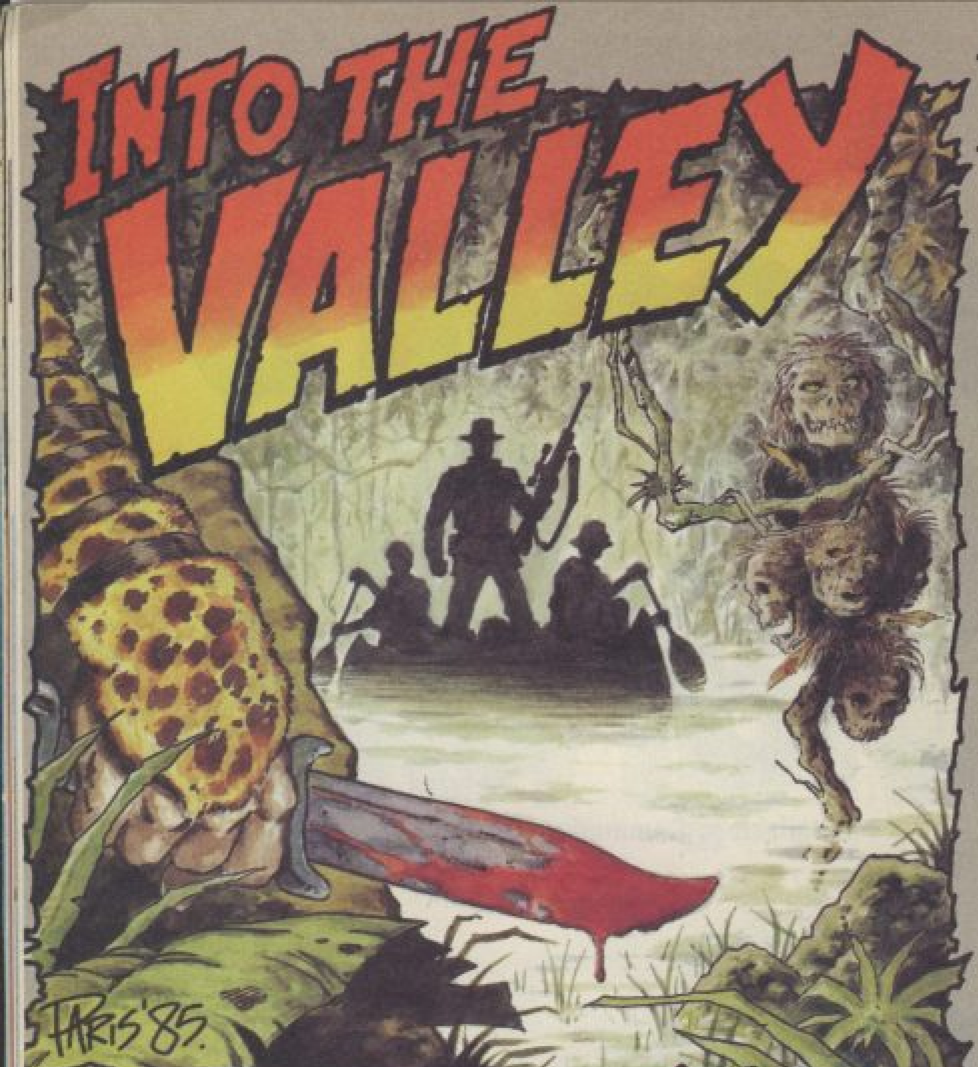
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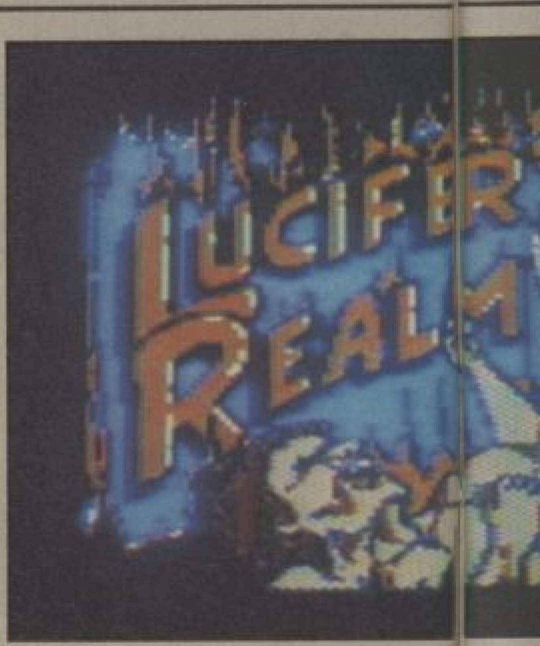
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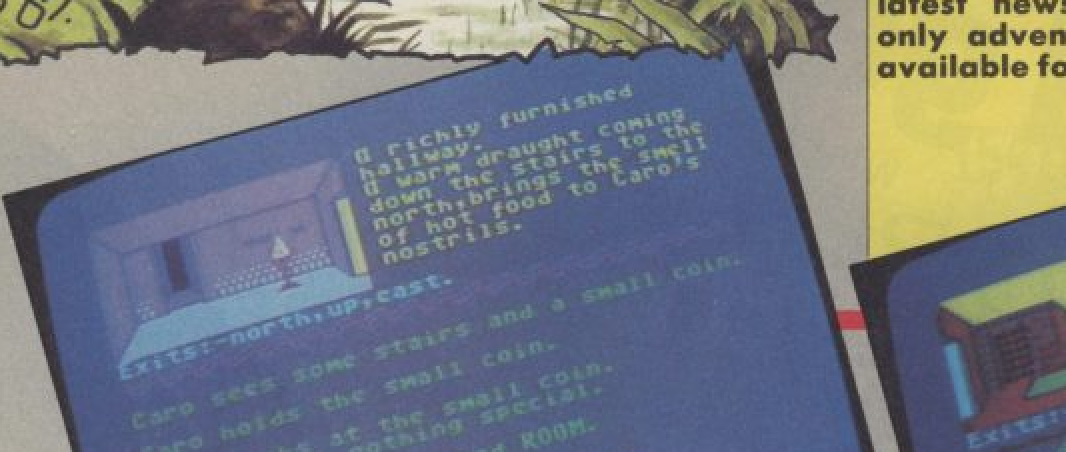
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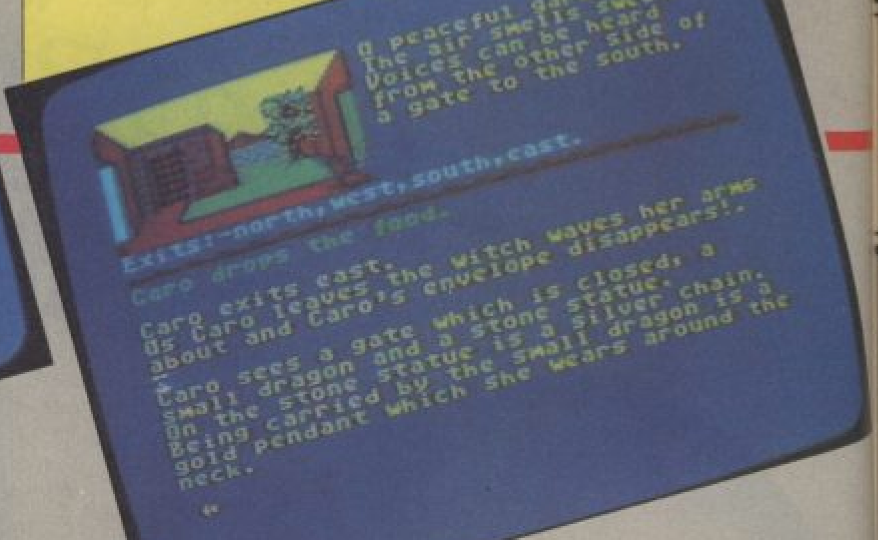
This month's Valley offers you the chance to win Melbourne House's long-awaited *Lord of the Rings* game. John Ransley meanwhile brings you a couple of surprise gems in the shape of *The Magician's Ball* and *Super Gran*. Guest contributor Roger Garret from the Adventureline Club persuaded us to tell you all about two games from a little known company called 8th Day. There's all the latest news and the only adventure chart available for 64 users.



American graffiti

US Gold's All American Adventures subsidiary has promised that a string of adventures from





Sheer magic

Software houses such as Activision and Telarium are making brave attempts to break the mould of the traditional adventure scenario with titles like *Mindshadow, The Eiger Sanction* and *Amazon* — but there's little doubting that the sagas of magic and mysticism which take the player to fabulous worlds of fantasy to mingle with characters not usually found waiting for a No. 172 bus still hold plenty of appeal for adventurers of all ages.

Global Software have therefore probably done the right thing in making **The Magician's Ball** (£7.95) their label's debut adventure title — but playing safe doesn't mean boring play and I reckon that TMB is likely to be loitering in the Valley's chart for quite some time thanks to word-of-mouth recommendation.

The storyline is predictable enough; the player assumes the role of Caro — a sort of prototype Mad Max — who takes time out to save the indispensable beautiful princess from a wicked necromancer whose armoury includes a ring capable of turning his victims to stone. "Stone me!" they cry, as the transformation is completed.

On-screen presentation comprises a full-colour graphic of every location together with a brief description and lines of additional variable information — such as the movable objects to be found there. Inputs vanish the moment they're entered, which can be a little irritating if you forget what your last command was, but at least the last half dozen or so responses remain in view to give you some check on how the action has progressed.

The parser will accept both conventional verb/noun pairs and complete sentences, and you can also converse with other characters who — Hobbit-like — have lives of their own and take independent action. A novel feature is that you can also slip out of Caro's skin and take on the persona of another character, thus viewing and participating in the proceedings from a different viewpoint. Quite neat that. Other play aids include single-key repeat commands.

With little more than 40 locations, *The Magician's Ball* can hardly be compared with a Level 9 hike but then it doesn't pretend to be an ambitious adventure in terms of its map size; instead it aims to pose problems of above-average sophistication. It does so admirably well, and 64/128 owners are bound to appreciate also the care taken to heighten one's enjoyment of it all with snatches from Tubular Bells which make decent use of dear old SID, whose potential is much-neglected in games having considerably greater pretensions than this one.

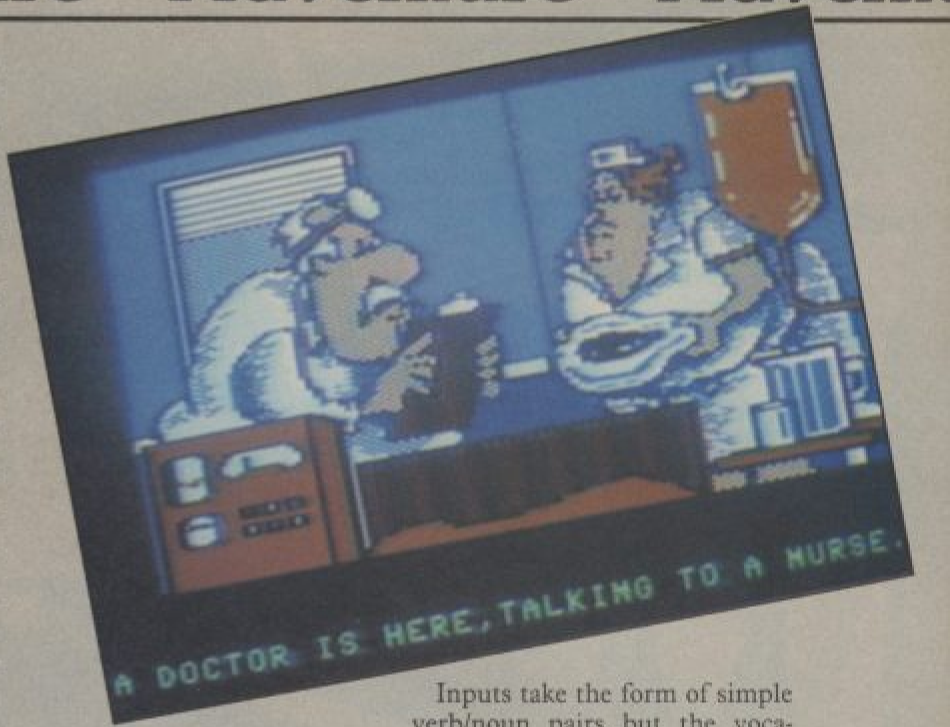


Sierra Online and other top-notch Stateside software houses are in the pipeline — and if AAA can keep the quality high and the prices low, British players may at last have sight of many titles which have been priced away from our shores by import duty in the past.

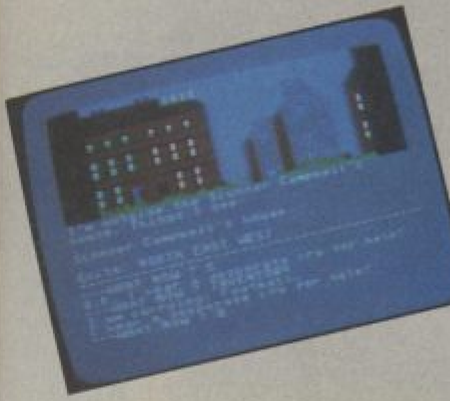
Among AAA's first offerings are *Wizard and the Princess* and *Lucifer's Realm*, both on disk at only £14.95. In the former, you get your actual damsel in distress-type scenario — and it soon becomes all-too-plain that you'll need more than a certain way with conundrums to get through it. This is partly because of the dullness of the plot and puzzles but mainly because of the crudeness of the graphics. Even accounting for the fact that this title's around three years old, such poor quality is hard to reconcile from a streetwise outfit like US Gold. I suggest that someone there reassesses *Wizard and the Princess* mighty quick.

Lucifer's Realm on the other hand bears out that All American Adventures might be a source of the good stuff after all. Its presentation breaks away from the usual conventions; it bears some similarity to the disk version of *The Hobbit* in that the screen toggles between some pretty impressive graphics and the text handling. What happens is that the moment you start typing a response, the picture is replaced by the text sheet on which your input and certain other details appear. If you make the right connection, the old 1541 (unless you're one of those rich bods with the new drive) churns grudgingly into action and zips a new graphic onto the screen.

While borrowing from the fantasy formula, *Lucifer's Realm* comes up with some novel ideas. You start the adventure by signing off from life and it's soon time to get measured for a Bacofoil two-piece to meet Old Nick himself. But it seems that he's finding trouble at t'sulphur quarries in that newcomers such as Adolf and Benito are into the power stakes and aim to establish a hotted-up Fourth Reich on the spot. Lucifer needs your help to get rid of these nouveau nasties and offers you a ticket to the Pearly Gates if you'll help.



Inputs take the form of simple verb/noun pairs but the vocabulary seems pretty extensive, and you can conveniently use one side of the play disk to save a game — though as you're already dead, failure merely means a return to the starting point. The puzzles are also fairly fresh — many are at least as good as those you'll find in a Scott Adams effort. An encouraging sampler this — even if the digitised pictures of authors Jymm and Robyn Pearson (yes, honestly) on the credit screens are maybe a little too cutesy by half.



The return of Super Gran

It happens rarely, but it's rewarding when one stumbles upon a great little adventure almost by chance — especially when it's one that comes from the pen of AI's prodigious duo Brian Howarth and Mike Woodroffe but which publishers Tynesoft slipped into the market apparently unannounced and unnoticed a couple of months back.

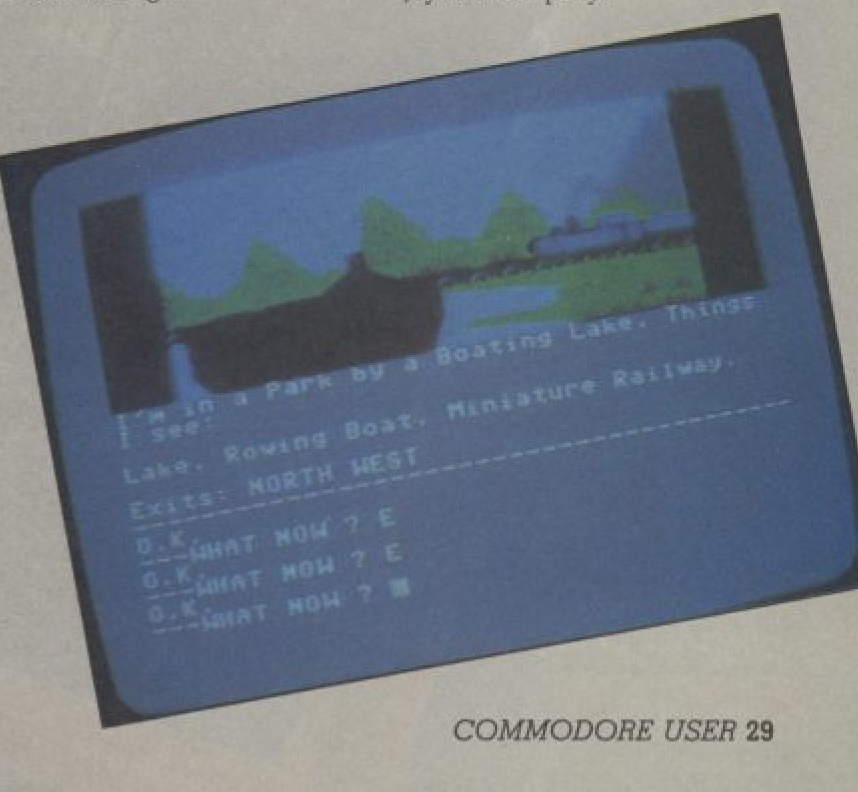
I'm talking about *Super Gran: The Adventure* — and before you all groan, let me at once make it clear that it's not to be confused with the Super Gran arcade game which reviewers savaged — and evidently rightly so. Now, oddly, Tynesoft have released the adventure as a double pack with the arcader for £7.99. Guess you can always stick the latter in some poor joystick jabbing Johnnie's Christmas stocking while you get down to tackling its first-rate packmate.

Super Gran, as if you didn't know, is the plaid-strewn heroine of a popular children's TV series who weekly survives one-to-one confrontations with the evil Scunner Campbell. In this adventure, he's swiped some valuables from a local museum and it's the task of you as Super Gran, aided by copious helpings of porridge, to outwit Scunner and return the artefacts to their proper home (Arts Council cutbacks presumably don't leave anything over for insurance premiums).

All the features and quality that you'd expect from an AI title are here, such as stacks of good-looking graphics and Howarth's classic screen layout. You can use a comma or full stop to string commands as well as construct full sentence inputs.

After a few minutes of play, you'd forget that this was ever billed as an 'easier' adventure but, thankfully, the Howarth trademark of a mindbending opening puzzle is missing from this particular offering. After a little lateral thinking (not to mention a useful crib from the cassette insert) I managed to pole vault my way into action. Lots of interesting and nicely-depicted locations await your attention, including a miniature railway, boating lake, castle ruins, and a theatre with plenty to explore below its stage.

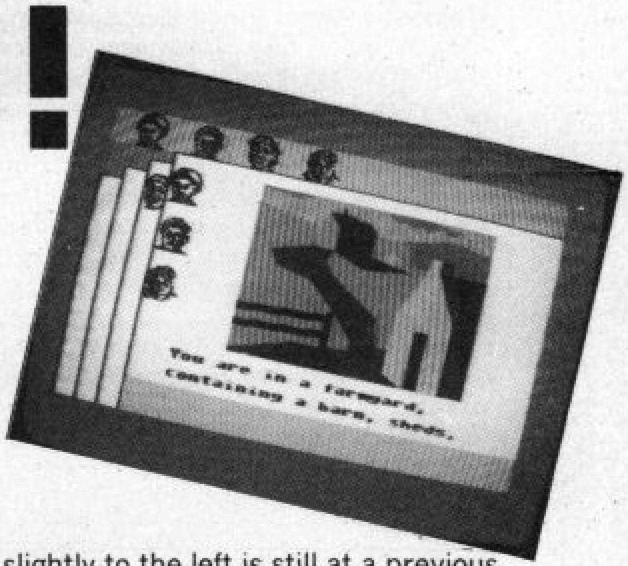
Adventure International has been rivalled only by Level 9 for the consistency and sheer volume of its adventures in 1985. Though appearing on the Tynesoft label, *Super Gran: The Adventure* is definitely a product of the AI stable and thus you may expect of it the quality found in *Gremlins* and *Touchstones*. A dark horse is Super Gran — seek the old biddy out and I promise you that you'll enjoy her company.





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WIN LORD OF THE RINGS!



Roll up, roll up! For our bumper Christmas give-away. We have FIFTY copies of LORD OF THE RINGS from Melbourne House to be won.

This epic adventure game rendition of Tolkien's magical story contains two cassettes, Part 1 of the book — 'The Fellowship of the Ring', all beautifully boxed and worth a whopping £14.95.

MBH know that adventure fans are expecting a lot from this game — especially bearing in mind the fifteen pound price tag — so to ensure the game delivers, a team of programmers headed up by Hobbit programmer Philip Mitchell, have been beavering away all year.

Also in the team are graphics whizz Russel Comte, and William Tang who is helping with the artificial intelligence routines — essential for making the characters respond sensibly to the inputs typed in by players. The team also includes several freelance illustrators, musicians, and back up programmers working on conversions and various bits of code. By anyones standards it's a huge undertaking. Probably bigger than anything that has been done by anyone anywhere in the world before. It's a hell of a tough job — turning probably the best adventure story in the English language into a computer game.

Are you sitting comfortably?

For those of you who haven't read the book or seen the film or video (shame on you) here's the gist of it.

Frodo Baggins, Sam Gamgee, Merry and Pippin (all Hobbits — little furry creatures) set off on a journey into the Land of Shadows. Their mission is not yet clear, but en-route they team up with the majestic Arigorn, son of Arithorn, Legolis the Elf, Gimley the dwarf, and Gandalf the wise old wizard.

In Book II — 'The Two Towers' — the plot is fully developed a classic struggle between the evil Dark Lords of Mordor — and the good guys, the Hobbits, Elves, Dwarves, Tree People and, of course Gandalf and Arigorn.

'The Return of the King', tells of the final conflict between good and evil and the hobbits return to the Shire, and the changes that occurred there in their absence.

Dozens of other colourful characters turn up as the story unfolds and the world of the Rings is vividly described by Tolkein's poetic, fast-moving and exciting writing style.

If you haven't read it, do so — even if you don't intend playing the game. I promise you won't regret it.

Playing the game

Each of the books in the trilogy will have a two cassette adventure, plus the book, launched, according to MBH at "six monthly intervals".

Information has been tough to come by about the Fellowship but from what we have been able to dig up for you it does appear to be very special.

We do know that the game will allow you to play the part of four of the main characters from the book — the Hobbits: Frodo, Merry, Pippin and Sam Gamgee.

You can choose either of these characters at the beginning of the game and stick with that one until the end or switch between all of them continually.

The band across the top of the screen shot shows the faces of the four characters that you can play. In the left hand column are shown the four characters involved at the current location that this player has reached (not very far). The head slightly to the left is still at a previous location.

Talking of locations the Fellowship of the Ring has 200 of them — most of the major ones with a graphic illustration similar to the screen shot above.

Another superlative feature will be the game's ability to understand really complicated commands. The interpreter can deal with longer sentences than any adventure Melbourne have done before and it also has a chasm-like vocabulary — an enormous 800 words.

Into the Valley will shortly feature an in-depth review of *Lord of the Rings* but from what we know already it is well worth winning — so reach for those stamps and envelopes now!

How to win?

All we want you to do is correct the following titles of Tolkien's books and then tell us (in not more than 100 words) why you like playing adventures.

1. Farmer Giles from Spam.
2. Letters from Father Christiansen.
3. The Slimmerillan.

The correct titles are:—

1. ....

2. ....

3. ....

I like playing adventures because (please use spare sheet of paper).

Entries to Lord of the Rings Competition, Priory Court, Farringdon Lane, London EC1R 3AU.

Entries must reach us by December 22.

My top three current adventures are:

1. ....

2. ....

3. ....

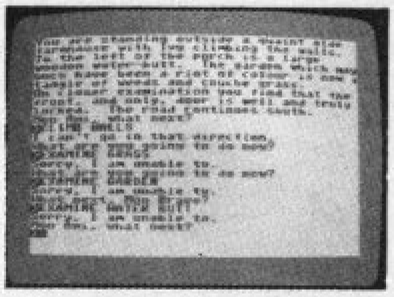
A history lesson

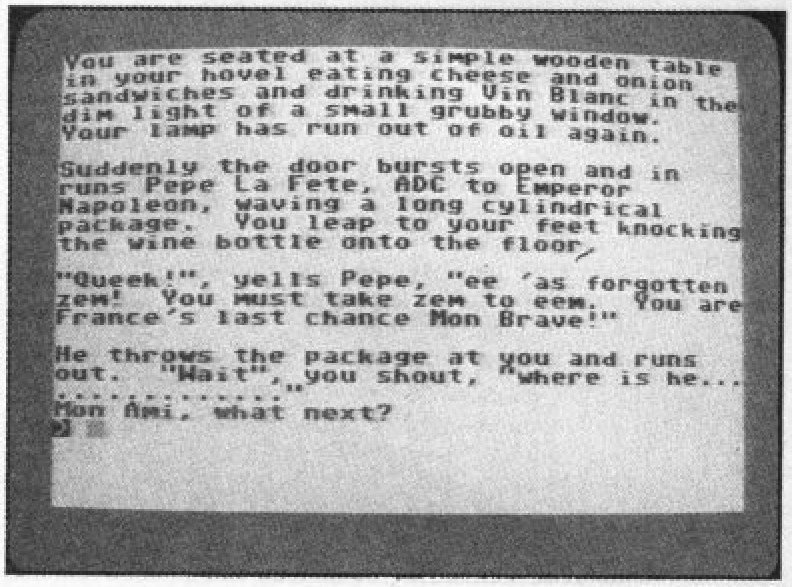
Considerez-vous une lesson histoire. Some deux siècles ago there lived un grosse fromage qui s'appele Napoleon who adored conquering places. Indeed, Napoleon was a right petit piquer but eventually il est shafted at Waterloo by le grand duc anglais avec le conk énorme who préfêrer wearing les boots kinky.

In **Napoleon's Sandwiches** (Sim Soft, £7.95) you assume the role of Napoleon's aide de camp (non business amusant, s'il vous plaît). One jour, vous are having a quiet Gitane when in rushes a messenger with a parcel pour l'emperor.

Alors comes le tricky rôle — taking le action exact to avoid vous getting mort while tackling the big chief. Après discovering la sortie premièr, there are a nombreux of très bien places to visiter. Vous could commencer exploring le bar quaint or la rue forked — or take quarante winks at l'hotel low prix. But vous must not delay too long because les risques will soon be staring you in le visage. Extract un digit if vous désirer to frictionner shoulders with old short maison himself and keep la belle France free.

Here endeth le lecon histoire (en franglais). I suspect that this enjoyable effort was mastered on Le Quill — which the authors have evidently used the way it was meant to be — to shortcut the drudgery of programming so that they could concentrate their talents on producing an entertaining game. The text screens are very well written with plenty of originality, atmosphere and humour. And since the complete adventure comes in two parts taking up both sides of the tape, you're also getting value for money. Some software talent scout could do worse than to search out authors Pearce et Reeve to give *Napoleon's Sandwiches* the greater market exposure it deserves.





Games without frontiers

I have always held a certain amount of reservation about 'Quilled' adventures, until I discovered a new company called 8th Day. Their adventures are terrific, sparkling gems, which have totally altered my opinions about the *Quill*.

Of the six adventures available, the two latest are *Quann Tulla* and *Faerie*, both rich in imagination and atmosphere.

Quann Tulla takes you into a science fiction world of strange locations and even stranger inhabitants. From the opening text only descriptions, you will realise that your mission is not going to be easy. After a long and bitter battle the Evil Empire is set to take over the ailing Federation, your task is to find the top secret manuals, despatch an evil traitor and destroy the crippled Flagship of the Just Federation. Progress is difficult, databanks need to be accessed. Hygene Probes will attempt to stop your endeavours and a malevolent Crane also causes a problem.

8th Day have decided against graphics, sticking to the traditional text only format, and I for one feel that the inclusion of graphics would not enhance the game one iota, considering the

● ADVENTURE NEWS ● ADVENTURE NEWS ● ADVENTURE NEWS ● ADVENTURE NEWS

● **Adventure International** plan to release *Questprobe 3*, the long-awaited sequel to *Hulk* and *Spiderman* featuring The Human Torch and The Thing, by the new year. And *Questprobe 4* (maybe out by Easter '86 but don't hold your breath) will have a novel twist in that the player takes on the role of the baddie — Marvel Comics' cadaverous Dr Doom.

● **Some truly dedicated** micro-adventurers I know extend their aesthetic enjoyment of otherwise aurally boring quests by plugging their heads into Walkmans while playing them. I'm told that, for example, soaking up Clannad's *Robin of Sherwood* soundtrack album from the TV series while exploring *The Touchstones of Rhiannon* is particularly effective. Maybe Manual and his Magic Castanets or Anton Karas could do the same for *Terrormolinos* and *Rats* respectively. Watch out, then, for *Darkness at Dawn*, an adventure in which the puzzles are portrayed as sound effects rather than presented in text or graphics.

● **Keep an eye** on the bargain bins for yesteryear adventure hits at trific low prices. Typical knockdowns I've spotted recently are *Valhalla* at £4.95, several Supersoft titles at £1.99, and the classic *Twin Kingdom Valley* slashed to £2.50.

● **Lothlorien**, renowned among micro wargamers for their well-implemented computer battle-games, are dipping a toe in the adventure well with the release of *Time Sanctuary*, described as a futuristic adventure game featuring surrealistic landscape graphics and the facility to communicate with 18 characters. Your challenge is to locate and trade for six crystals to power a time machine that will let you escape from the sanctuary, and there's a large map, houses and a maze to explore along the way.

● **Infocom**, still shy of forging formal links with the British market, will be releasing *Spellbreaker* here this month. Complementing *Wishbringer* (reviewed November), *Spellbreaker* is reputedly much more puzzling — and difficult — than its predecessor. The game is fleshed out to Infocom's usual high standards with extras which include an Enchanter's Guild pinbadge and a catalogue of magic equipment. Price will be £34.95.

● **PSS now hope** to release a 64/128 version of *Swords and Sorcery* early in the New Year. The adventure was first announced in the summer of '84, and even back in June of this year PSS were claiming that 7,000 programming hours had already gone into the game, which was being developed with innovative graphics and the ability to accept add-on modules. Whether all these original features will be incorporated in the final £8.95 version remains to be seen.

● **Level 9** will, following the side-stepping release of their satirical SF quizzer *The Worm in Paradise*, be producing a sequel to their chart-topping *Red Moon*, provisionally titled *The Price of Magic*. The Austin 4 are also rumoured to be working on a 10,000-location MUD-style interactive adventure for up to 1,000 simultaneous players based on Arthurian legend.

• **Adventure programmers** both sides of the Atlantic are swooning over the specification of the Amiga — and are gearing up to surpass Infocom's welcome (but dullish) announcement that they will soon be releasing Amiga versions of backlist hits such as *Zork*. Two features especially are exciting the more imaginative programming entrepreneurs — the Amiga's onboard speech synthesiser which can be effortlessly programmed even in Basic to make the Amiga say full sentences in different male or female voices, and of course its multitasking facility which will make the present founder generation of icon-driven-cum-window games such as *The Fourth Protocol* look like they were developed with a slate and chalk.

• **Firebird** swoop into the full-blooded adventure stakes with *Runestone*, out any day now, which they'll release in their Gold Range at £9.95. Their budget-priced debut adventure titles *The Helm* and *Subsunk* both did well in the Valley's chart, but *Runestone* is a more ambitious offering altogether. More news next month.

• **Beyond's** new masters, British Telecom, might hold back Mike Singleton's successor to *Lords of Midnight* on the 64/128 even longer in favour of rush releasing a Commodore version of *Sorderon's Shadow*. Using the same landscaping techniques which gave *Lords* and *Doomdark's Revenge* such visual appeal, the new title has been devised by those wonderful people who brought you *Shadowfire*. Play features include more than 32,000 views of 4,000 locations, a 750-word vocabulary, and three-sentence command recall.

• ADVENTURE NEWS • ADVENTURE NEWS • ADVENTURE NEWS • ADV

excellent text descriptions.

The second adventure is *Faerie* in which you must search for hidden treasure in an ever-changing surreal scenario of both under and upperworlds. Your task commences in the upperworld. You will need to solve various problems which are by no means easy, before finding the correct objects to enable you to enter the underworld. Here, as above, you will find many weird and wonderful people and places. Excellent text descriptions create an atmosphere of spine-tingling anticipation. Characters straight from 'A Midsummer Night's Dream' await to help but others wait to harm you. Magical words, only pronouncable in an adventure, are yours to command and you will certainly need them before this game is completed.

Faerie is the type of adventure that will keep you riveted to the keyboard for many enjoyable hours, but it is definitely for the more experienced adventurer. As in its predecessor, the text descriptions are rich in detail and both have that magical quality that is rarely found in some of the adventures available at the moment. Priced at only £2.50 each, I would recommend these games to everybody.



Mike Smith and Gary Kelbrick are the brains behind 8th Day. Born in Liverpool, both take an active part in writing and producing their games.

It was *The Quill* that provided the perfect vehicle to exercise their vivid imaginations on. As Mike said, "We knew we could write adventures that were totally different, full of imagination, and far removed from the usual Middle Earth type game".

The recent releases are only 'A foretaste of what is to come". Two highly controversial games are due for release in the not-too-distant future, plus they are both hard at work producing a revolutionary science fiction trilogy "Unlike anything ever seen before". **Roger Garret**

RE NEWS • ADVENTURE NEW

• **Gilsoft** plan to have at least a disk version of *The Illustrator* for the 64/128 in the shops by Christmas. The utility permits the simple, menu-style creation of full-colour graphics to be incorporated into adventures written using *The Quill* — even those already completed as text games. Price will be around £14.95.

• **All American Adventures'** Richard Tisdall keeps me guessing as to the what precisely, where and when of the cortex-crumpling 3D *Alternate Reality* from Datasoft. What is for certain is that it looks like making it into the Guinness Book of Records as the world's most expensive microadventure. The City — the first part of the saga — will be out on disk at £19.95 . . . and there are another six to come!

• **Audiogenic** are to take over the marketing of *The Secret of St Brides* from its Irish publishers to help ensure wider availability in Britain. The 1930s Angela Brazil-style spoof text adventure mystery set in a girls' school is available for the 64/128 at £6.95.

• CHARTS •

NEW	1	(–)	**Robin of Sherwood** — C64/128 (Adventure International, GrA, £7.95)
NEW	2	(–)	**Adrian Mole** — C64/128 (Mosaic/Level 9, GrA, £7.95)
	3	(1)	**Red Moon** — C64/128 (Level 9, GrA, £6.95)
	4	(4)	**Terrormolinos** — C64/128 (Melbourne House, GrA, £7.95)
	5	(2)	**Rats** — C64/128 (Hodder & Stoughton, GrA, £7.95)
	6	(6)	**Mordon's Quest** — C64/128 (Melbourne House, TA, £5.95)
	7	(3)	**The Fourth Protocol** — C64/128 (Hutchinson, GrA, £12.95/£15.95 disk)
	8	(5)	**Castle Blackstar** — C64/128 (CDS, TA, £2.99)
	9	(7)	**Beatle Quest** — C64/128 (Number 9 Software, £9.95/£11.95 disk)
	10	(9)	**Gremlins** — C64/128 (Adventure International, GrA, £9.95)

Adventure International are right on target with the first in their planned series of *Robin of Sherwood* adventures. The much acclaimed debut title, *Touchstones of Rhiannon*, written by Brian Howarth and Mike Woodroffe and packed with splendid graphic and animated screens, has hit the bullseye within weeks of its release.

Modern-day anti-hero Adrian Mole — no stranger to charts as it is — must be dead embarrassed by all the attention being paid to his innermost thoughts, but Mosaic's tape plus 1986 diary Christmas package at £14.95 or £17.95 on disk could knock the Loxley fugitive off his arboreal perch by the New Year.

Level 9's other chart creation is still shining brightly, while Melbourne House's tale of package holiday traumas has pulled in enough winter bookings to move up a peg.

It's simply a matter of switch and swop for the rest of this month's slots — but Christmas sales are likely to bring an entirely fresh look to the January line-up.

Commodore Dealers

The special offers and a wide range of Commodore hardware and software are all available from the Commodore Dealers listed below.

DGH Software, 10 North Street, Ashford, Kent.
Geerings of Ashford, High Street, Ashford.
Radio 88, 88 Longbridge Road, Barking, Essex.
Alphascan, Chester House, Windsor End, Beaconsfield.
Camden Computers, 462 Coventry Road, Small Heath, Birmingham.
Deane Computers, Sea Road North, Bridport, Dorset.
Empire Electro Centre, 783-789 Leeds Road, Bradford.
Erricks of Bradford, Fotosonic House, Pawson Square, Bradford.
Gamer, 71 Last Street, Brighton.
Gamer, 24 Gloucester Road, Brighton.
High Voltage, 53-59 High Street, Croydon.
Metyclean, 60 George Street, Croydon.
Sarays, 43 Church Street, Croydon.
FBC Systems, 10 Castlefields, Main Centre, Derby.
Gordon Harwood, 69/71 High Street, Derby.
Geerings of Ashford, 13 Bench Street, Dover, Kent.
P & L Cash Registers, Dunstable, Beds.
Adams World of Software, 190c Station Road, Edgware, Middx.
Micro Workshop, Station Approach, Epsom, Surrey.
Geerings of Ashford, 91 Preston Street, Fathersham, Kent.
Trionic Ltd., 144 Station Road, Harrow, Middx.
Geerings of Ashford, 104-106 Mortimer Street, Herne Bay.
Tomorrow's World, 15 Paragon Street, Hull.
Cavendish Commodore Centre, London Road, Leicester.
Dimension, 29/31 Silver Street, Leicester.
Sonic Foto, t/a Rother Cameras Ltd., 256 Tottenham Court Road, London.
Tasha Computers, 191 Kensington High Street, London W8.
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Video Vision, 168 Kensington High Street, London W8.
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Logic Sales, 19 The Broadway, The Bourne, Southgate, London W14.
Chromasonic, 48 Junction Road, Archway, London N19.
Chromasonic, 238 Muswell Hill, Broadway, Muswell Hill, London N10.
G & B Computers, 242 Tottenham Court Road, London W1.
G & B Computers, 230 Tottenham Court Road, London W1.
Metyclean, 137 The Strand, London.
Metyclean, 92 Victoria Street, London.
Adams World of Software, 779 High Road, North Finchley, London N19.
Hobbyte, Arndale Centre, Luton.
Kent Microcomputers, 57 Union Street, Maidstone, Kent.
Square Deal, 373/375 Footscray Road, New Eltham.
Intoto, 1 Heathcoat Street, Hockley, Nottingham.
Logic Sales, 6 Midgate, Peterborough.
Geerings of Ashford, 25 Queens Street, Ramsgate.
Joe Micro (Rhyl Computer Centre), 20 Russell Road, Rhyl, Clwyd.
MU Games, 245 High Street, Slough.
Hobbyte, 10 Market Place, St. Albans, Herts.
The Model Shop, 22 High Street, Stroud, Glos.
L & J Computers, 192 Honeypot Lane, Queensbury, Stanmore, Middx.
Bucon Microstore, Swansea.
JKL Computers, 7 Windsor Street, Uxbridge, Middx.
Bell & Jones, 39 Queen's Square, West Bromwich.



G FORCE

THE MEAN TEAM

Here they are as you've never seen them before — the G Force looking meaner than ever. And well they might because they have had some pretty late nights over the last few weeks — hammering away at the latest major releases.

There have been quite a few of those to contend with as well. With Christmas coming the software houses are bringing out their big launches of 1985 — bidding for the Yuletide mega-spend when Mums, Dads, Grannies, boyfriends, and girlfriends reach for the folding stuff to purchase prezzies of the software variety.

Mike 'Hot Shots' Pattenden journeyed to deepest Hertfordshire to bring you an exclusive *(It's that word again — Ed.)* preview of the Young Ones game from Orpheus. He has also discovered little people living in his computer with the latest launch from Activision. I can't tell you what our Mike christened the little fellow he met in his review copy but despite the unspeakable name he gave him he got quite keen on him in the end. MIKE WILL YOU PLEASE PUT THAT GAME DOWN.

G Force supremo, Chris Anderson, gives the thumbs down, or should that be fingers up, to *Harvey Smith's Showjumping*, but goes wild about *Fighting Warrior* — the latest large character fighting game from Fist people Melbourne House.

Eugene Lacey pulls rank and insists (again) that *Quake Minus 1* be made December Screen Star. Our cuddly Ed also gets in on the action with our exclusive *(It's that word again, and stop calling me cuddly — Ed.)* preview of Geoff Capes' Strong Man game. Geoff Capes takes a sweet revenge for Mike's gratuitous comments in his October Hot Shots column.

Jon Sutherland checks out another two examples of the war games nostalgia boom — in PSS's *Battle of Britain* and Microprose/US Gold's *Operations Into Europe*.

Last but not least Ken McMahon — a G Force hardcase who is harder on naff software than the *Daily Mail* on Derek Hatton. This month Killer Ken looks at *Scarabaeus*. Scarawhat? It's the new one from Ariolasoft, as is *Wizard*.

There are no less than twenty BIG reviews this month plus four red hot previews. If you think you are good enough to join the G Force, take a look at the competition on the final page of this month's free supplement.



"Quake Minus 1 — *could be Beyond's most successful game this Xmas.*"

SCREEN☆STAR

Quake Minus 1
Commodore 64
Beyond
Price: £9.95/cass

Quake Minus 1 has been a long time coming but is, believe me, well worth the wait. Mike 'Lords of Midnight' Singleton has really pulled out the stops in what is his first true arcade game since *3 Deep Space* (sorry to bring that up Mike).

But before you start telling all your mates that there's a new Singleton game out, spare a thought for Mike's trusty assistant Warren Ffoulkes — who is co-author of *Quake*.

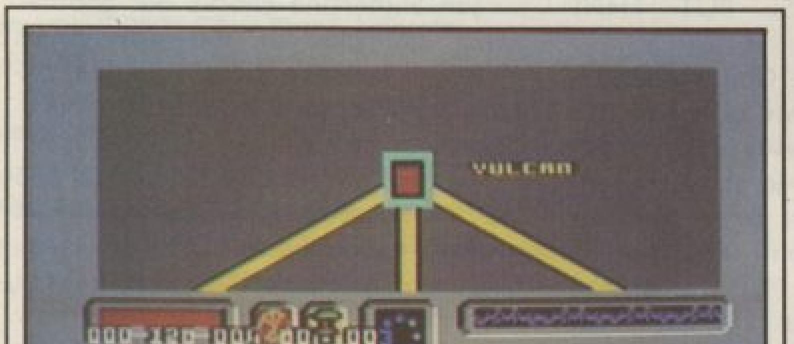
Warren started working for Singleton over a year ago on his play-by-mail game — *Starnet*. Now he is credited as an equal partner in the production of *Quake*. OK Warren, we get the message, you didn't just make the tea.

Enough about the programmers, what about the game itself?



Credit screen — "Warren Foulkes didn't just make the tea".

Bottom left of screen shows the 3D working map of the Titan Complex.



The location is an underwater power station on the Atlantic sea bed. A futuristic terrorist organisation called the Robot Liberation Front — sounds like a good cause to me — are about to sabotage the Titan complex. Earth's only chance is provided by a group of scientists who manage to re-establish communications with one of Titan's five control computers — the Hermes.

This is where you come into it. You must use the Hermes to knock out the other computers — Zeus, Poseidon, Vulcan and Ares.

It is a race against time as the Titan Complex draws its energy

from the Earth's core and, if stability isn't restored, the core will blow, sending tidal waves crashing over Europe and North America.

Knocking out the other computers is no easy task. Each of them is protected by various defence systems plus the renegade droids. The Hermes is armed with all manner of icon-selectable weaponry. These are mines, torpedos, missile pods, fireball guns, Ionic blasters, shock shields, plasma shields and ordinary lasers.

The screen is split in two. The top half shows the action as it happens with your computer scrolling left to right as well as 3D-style into the screen as you move forward. This portion of the screen also displays the star shaped map of the complex with the positions of the other computers shown.

The bottom half of the screen shows the controls, weapon icons, damage control displays, clocks, weapon capabilities, energy level, fuel level, and a 3D map of the complex with direction arrow keys superimposed.

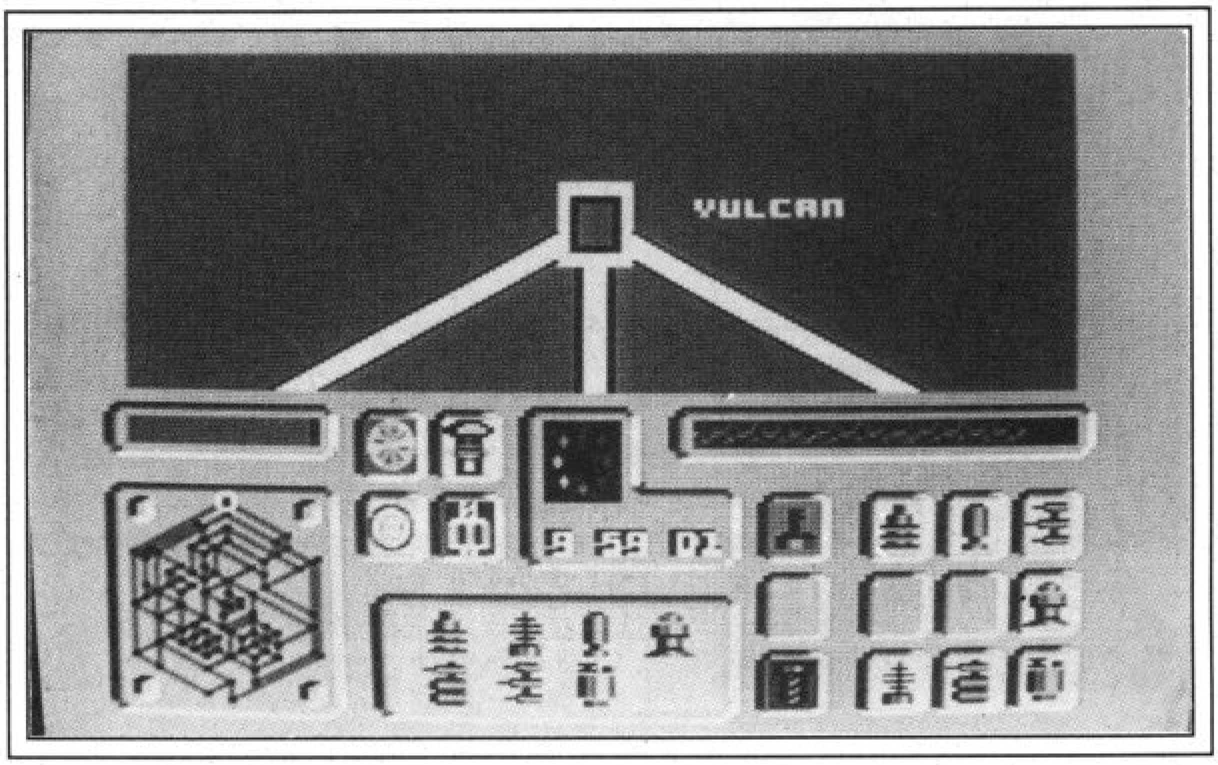
There is a hell of a lot to this game. Every single icon and item on the screen serves a purpose. Everything in the control panel has to be looked at and used. There are no useless frills. But to the game's merit the multitude of features do not detract from the playability. If you like to learn as you go along, then *Quake* allows you to just pick up the joystick and start to play: travelling, blasting, and working it out as you go.

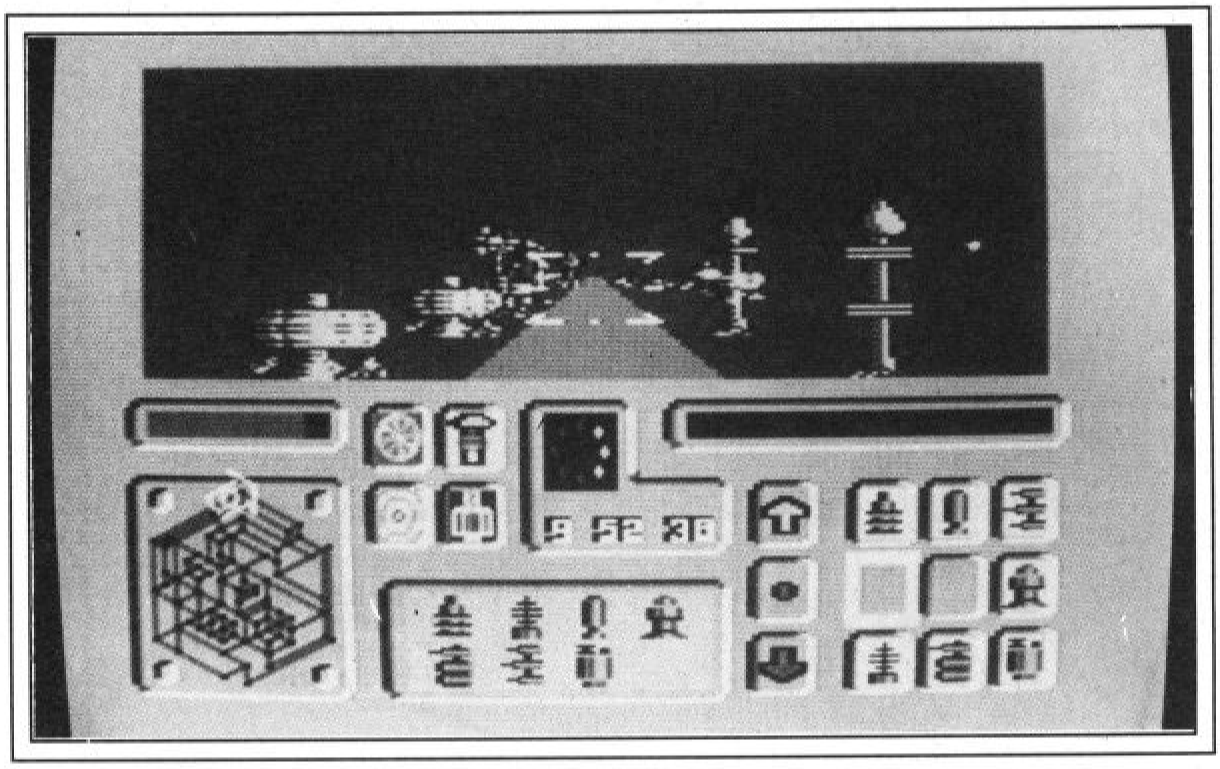
This is the most fun way to get into *Quake* — only referring to the pamphlet when you spot something you haven't seen before or something happens you don't understand.

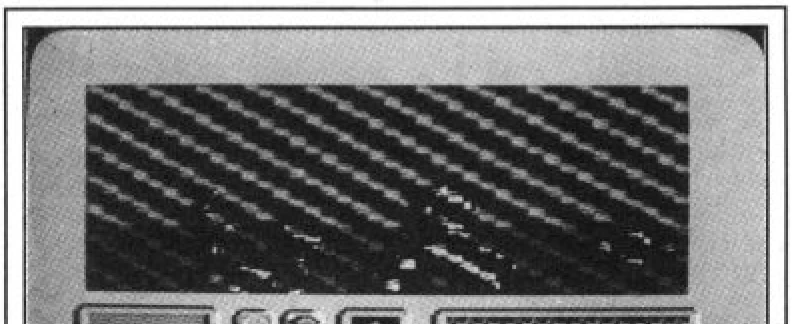
I have a feeling that this could be Beyond's most successful game this Xmas — even topping the much-hyped *Superman* and *Nexus*. Check it out — you won't be disappointed. *Quake Minus 1* is available on Beyond's new Monolith label.

Eugene Lacey

Graphics	★★★★
Sound	★★★★★
Toughness	★★★★★
Staying Power	★★★★
Value	★★★★★







Top: Hermes finds the renegade Vulcan computer on the scrolling screen map.

Middle: Hurtling down screen towards the Vulcan.

Bottom: Screen shakes as Hermes sustains direct hits.

Imhotep
Commodore 64/128
Ultimate
Price: £9.95/cass

Oh my poor fingers! I can hardly type. For the past four hours my hand has been welded to my joystick in an attempt to get past level 2 of Imhotep.

Egyptology seems to be flavour of the month at Ultimate. Their latest big screen epic casts you in the title role of the god Imhotep. The poor old Egyptians are starving again and Pharoah Zoser has appealed to Imhotep, his favourite god, to help them out. (There never actually was a pharoah called Zoser. Ultimate have obviously invented a fictitious one for fear of being cursed).

Let's start where I came in at level 2. You find yourself astride what looks like a wild goose, but is no doubt intended to be an ancient mythological bird. Below and behind you scroll the pyramids and plains of the Nile valley a la Revenge of The Mutant Camels, but not a dromedary in sight. Instead, hordes of Egyptians, also on geese, bent on your destruction. A bit silly really. A battle ensues in which you fire little eggs at each other, at this stage I fancied my chances, but I hadn't reckoned with the Kamikaze squadrons. If you miss these they head straight for you with lightening speed — don't stand a chance.

If you're good you can make your lives last about as many minutes, then you have to contend with raining fireballs as well. Ten thousand points takes you to level three, but the best I managed was a frustrating 9,800.

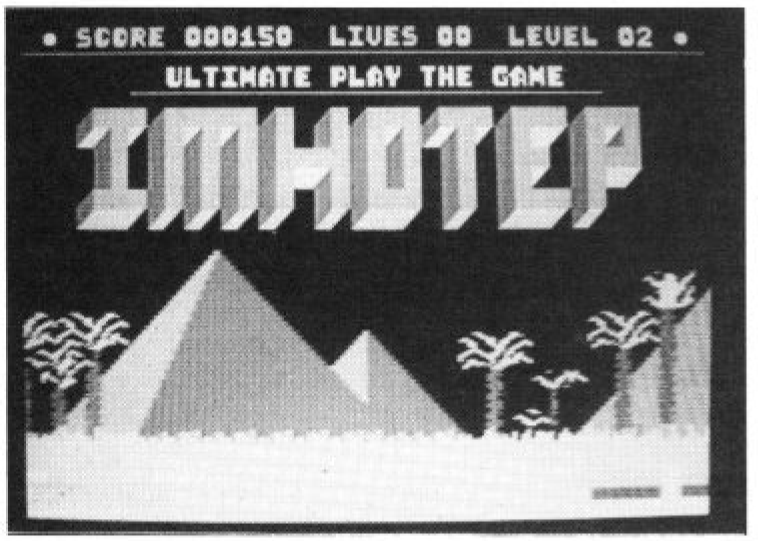
Imhotep is one of the most difficult games I've ever played, at least in terms of arcade skills. According to Ultimate it doesn't get any easier on the higher levels, so if you're looking for something that's hard to beat this could be it, but otherwise don't expect anything like the quality of their previous releases.

Ken McMahon

Graphics	★★★
Sound	★★★
Toughness	★★★★★
Staying Power	★★★★
Value	★★★



Ultimate's latest is an old-fashioned shoot 'em up.



Codename Mat II
Commodore 64
Domark
Price: £8.95/cass

The original *Codename Mat* was quite a big hit on the Spectrum last year. The follow-up takes the same idea a bit further. But not a lot.

Mat has been provided with a new ship the Centurion II, featuring several enhancements on model I, and this time the battle against the Myons ranges around a grid of 24 satellites. These must be protected to ensure a continued energy supply for the local karillium mines, karillium being 'the bringer of life' and, more importantly, the bringer of points.

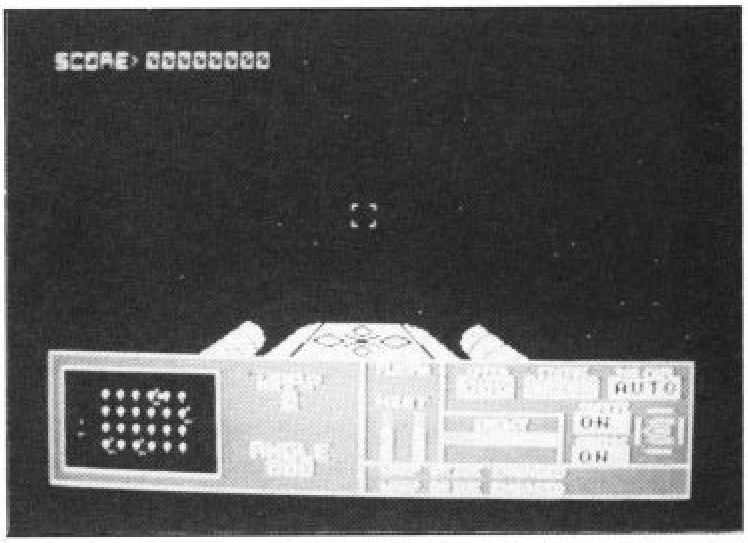
The screen display is divided horizontally. The top half is the usual unscientific view of stars which zoom toward you as you accelerate. The bottom contains various status displays. It includes a computer screen which can be used for short and long-range scans, a quadrant map, the tracking of enemies during combat and the provision of damage reports.

Your time is divided between blasting Myons out of the heavens and then frantically trying to repair your ship and any damaged satellites before warping off somewhere else to wipe out some more Myons before they do any more damage.

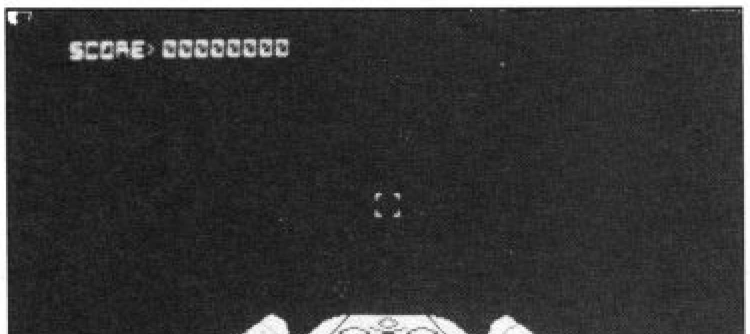
The blasting bit starts when the Alert status on the display panel goes red — a group of Myons are closing in. Switching on your battle computer, you can see how far away each craft is and track them individually. Once they're close enough to appear in view it's a question of getting them in your sights before they do too much damage. You have a choice of fire-power. Get rid of the attackers and you can then quickly go about damage repair.

This game's fine as far as it goes, but it does seem a tiny bit old hat. It's state-of-the-art Spectrum 1984. **Chris Anderson**

Graphics	★★
Sound	★★
Toughness	★★★
Staying Power	★★
Value	★★



"State-of-the-art Spectrum 1984".



Harvey Smith's Show Jumper
Commodore 64
Software Projects
Price: £7.95/cass

The once all-conquering Software Projects haven't had too many successes over the last year, and I fear they could be unlucky again with this one. The problem is the remarkable *Summer Games II*, which offers astonishingly good equestrian action and seven other events besides.

Still, if you hadn't seen S.G.II, first impressions of Show Jumper would be excellent. You find yourself astride a very nicely animated mount, pawing the ground with impatience at the start of the first of 12 courses.

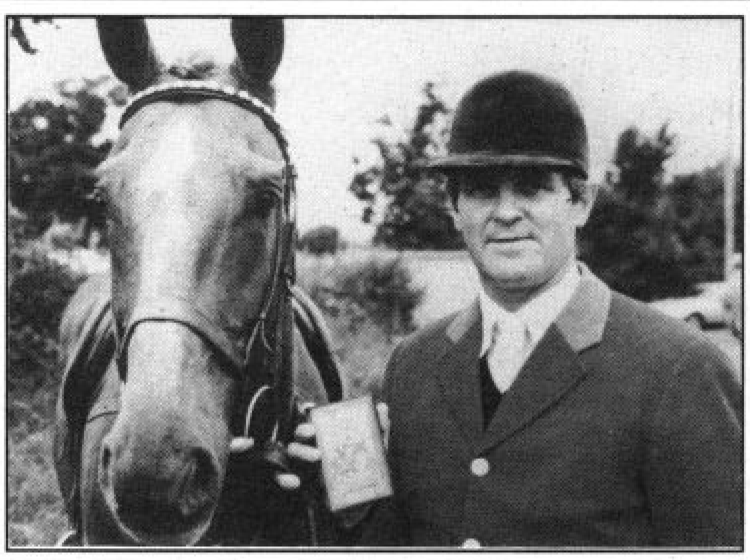
Nudge the joystick right and the horse starts to walk. Nudge again and the walk becomes a canter (the animation is actually the same as the "walk" but the horse moves faster). A third nudge and this time the animation changes very effectively into a gallop at full stretch.

The view of the horse appears in the main part of the screen which acts as a scrolling window on the action. Below is a map of the entire course which automatically highlights which fence you should jump next.

All that is involved in jumping a fence is moving the horse down the right ligh toward it and then pressing the fire-button at the appropriate moment, according to whether the horse is galloping or cantering (for fast times you should gallop except when approaching double fences or when a sudden change of direction is needed). This is, unfortunately, more basic, than the demanding joystick contortions required in S.G.II. However, it'll still take quite a bit of practice to get a clear round every time — and once you can do that there's always the challenge of getting faster times.

Mis-timing a jump can result in a refusal or even a spectacular fall from the saddle. And if you hit the wrong fence at any stage you get eliminated.

One very nice touch is a facility to allow you to design your own courses.



Harvey Smith grits his teeth, thinks of the royalties, and smiles for the camera.

Game sound consists of a pleasant rendition of Mozart's famous horn concerto, an effective hoof beat, various hooters when you make mistakes, and wild applause from the crowd at the end of the course — even when you've been eliminated at the second fence!

If it had been released four months earlier this program would have been a winner. But since then S.G.II has dramatically upped the standards for sports simulations, and poor old Harvey Smith suffers by comparison.

Chris Anderson

Graphics	★★★★
Sound	★★★★
Toughness	★★★
Staying Power	★★★
Value	★★★

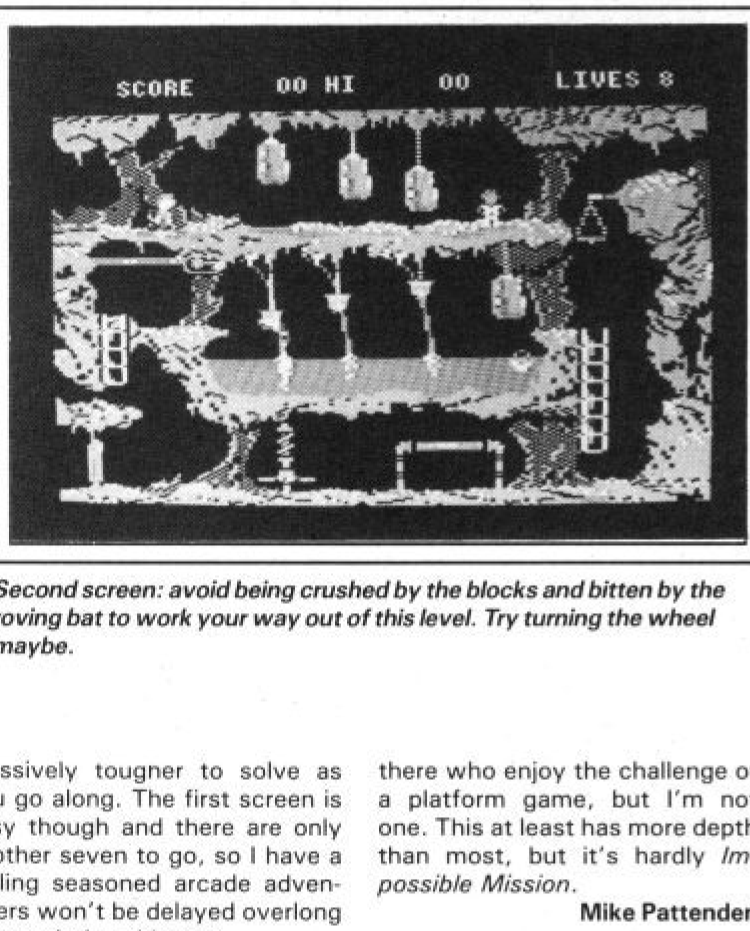
Goonies
Commodore 64
Datasoft/US Gold
Price: £9.95

Goonies is the game of the film. The film was written by Spielberg and the game by Spanburg but that's where all similarities end. You probably won't have seen the film yet so you'll have a job in following the instructions which tell you to relive the adventures of the Goonies. Not that it would be much help if you had seen the film.

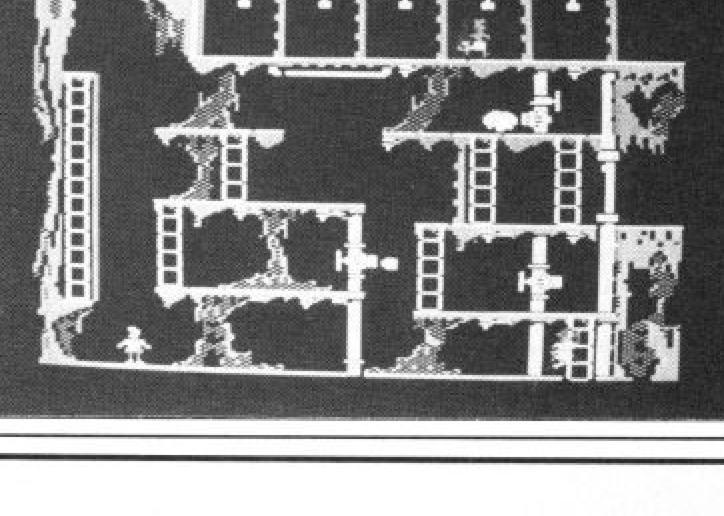
Your objective is to find the treasure hidden somewhere in the pirate ship that will save the family homes of the Goonies which are in danger of foreclosure. The evil Fratelli gang are out to thwart your efforts though.

What we have here is another (yawn) platform game of which there seem to be a number this month. They just won't lay down and die. This one takes the form of a puzzle. So you work your way around the various levels trying to solve the puzzle which stops you from progressing on to the next screen. At each level you control two of the Goonies and you must use both together to find your way on to the next stage.

Levels include the house, the pirate ship and the Copper Pot Chamber and they get progressively tougner to solve as you go along. The first screen is easy though and there are only another seven to go, so I have a feeling seasoned arcade adventurers won't be delayed overlong in completing this one.



Second screen: avoid being crushed by the blocks and bitten by the roving bat to work your way out of this level. Try turning the wheel maybe.



The gameplay is fairly good but sound and graphics are little more than average. It's a nice touch having to use two characters together though. I suppose there are still many out there who enjoy the challenge of a platform game, but I'm not one. This at least has more depth than most, but it's hardly *Impossible Mission*.

Mike Pattenden

Graphics	★★★
Sound	★★★
Toughness	★★★
Staying Power	★★★
Value	★★★

Discover SCARABAEUS

The Emerald Of The Pharoah



An incredible search and survival program in glorious 3D that will test your powers of logic and strategic timing to the full as you travel deeper and deeper into the pharoah's tomb.

But don't take our word for it – read the last diary entry written by the editor of this magazine, (sic – ed) before he began the search for Scarabaeus. We've not heard from him since . . .

"I have begun my quest to find Scarabaeus, the fabulous emerald jewel of the pharoah. It lies buried with the pharoah deep inside his clammy tomb. Alone I enter the deadly portal only to be bitten by a venomous spider! Now my very existence is in mortal danger. I must find the hidden medicines to cure my deadly wound before I am no more! My heart is weaker now and I may not live long enough to search the exhausting and disorientating maze. If I do, I may not have the strength to battle the patrolling zombies and capture frenzied ghosts. Whilst in the maze, I must collect hieroglyphic codes which enable me to locate the key to the Pharoah's coffin, determine medicines from poisons and collect zombie traps. Even without my weakened condition, I must acquire these codes if I am to stay alive! The thought of a new dawn seems distant to me now as I begin my descent into the dark horrors of the Pharoah's tomb to find the mighty Scarabaeus!"









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HIGH PERFORMANCE PROGRAMS

Little Compu

SCREEN★STAR

Apparently there's supposed to be something living in my 64. It's a load of rubbish, of course, but Activision insist it's true and they've sent me over some software to lure it out. They tell me it's a house. Ridiculous, they've finally flipped. Feeling like David Attenborough, I sat down to study the results.

Little Computer People
Commodore 64
Activision
Price: £9.99/cass
£14.99/disk

I don't quite know how to break this to you, but there's a little bloke walking round the house that's just appeared on screen. And what's more he's got his own dog.

His first reaction is to have a wander round the house. The place has got everything. I'm jealous of its amenities. I pay a fortune every month to live in a slum. He's got a TV, hi-fi, computer (a 64, natch) and a piano.

The first thing he does is to sit down at the joanna and rattle the ivories. It's Bach — he's an intellectual. I'd better send him a book. It seems I can send him food, water, records and books just by hitting the appropriate keys. I can even pet him. When he sits in the downstairs chair I can make a lever extend to ruffle his hair. He loves it. Another key makes the phone ring and the door chime.

I'm not sure about this bloke. I didn't ask for him. It's like having a baby dumped on your doorstep. I don't need the responsibility. Who wants a hi-tech goldfish anyway? He can't exactly fetch sticks or protect me from burglars can he?

Wait a minute, what's that noise? He seems to be banging on the screen, what does he want? I can't take this. He's challenging me to poker. How on earth does he expect to do that. Oh, he just flips the cards on the upper screen display. F1 to bet eh? All right then sucker . . .

It's an hour later and he's cleaned me out. Every time it got to an important moment he got up and poured himself a drink or made a sandwich. I'm beginning to dislike this little berk totally. He has annoying habits like leaving doors open and putting records on loudly when you least expect. I tell him so, but he just grins inanely at me, and switches on the telly. I bet he's a Sun reader.

I go to bed and switch the whole thing off. Perhaps he'll disappear or get run over or something. Please.

I dream all night I'm a little man in a computer. A huge face leers at me through the monitor screen. A finger the size of a lamp-post appears and squashes me. I wake up, sweating. It's early but I make straight for the computer and boot the disk up sharpish.

He's still there. Sitting calmly reading the morning paper. I run from the room cursing madly. He'll have to go. Is there, I wonder, a little computer people adoption agency? Perhaps the Salvation Army might take him. Maybe I could volunteer him for overseas service? I leave home for work and he's back at the piano tinkling away at something highbrow. Smartarse.

When I get back from work he's nowhere to be seen. He's gone! I cry with relief and reach for a copy of *Winter Games*. Peace at last. Just as I'm about to wreck his happy home he emerges from the toilet flushing it loudly and washing his hands thoroughly. AAARRRGGHH!!!

I resolved to kill him after he beat me at cards again this afternoon. He's not getting any more food and drink. Apparently they turn green and die. I wonder if you can be prosecuted for it? Is there a Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Little Computer People? It may become a test case.

I feel like Christie. He keeps going to his water dispenser, glass in hand and going away empty-handed and parched. He looks glum. Good.

He's been to the food cupboard for the nth time and it's bare. He looks very hurt and not a little queasy. I've tried to keep away from the ghastly business, but I'm drawn back to the monitor screen like a ghoul. Perhaps they'll reintroduce the death penalty after this gruesome killing. Where will I dump the body? They must be building a motorway somewhere.

He's made his way upstairs and sat at the typewriter. He's hammering away at the keys and now there's a message printing out at the top of the screen. Oh no! He's appealing to my humanity. He wants his drink bowl filled up and some food delivered. He calls me friend.

He's dashed off several letters asking for mercy and I've had an idea. I can't go through with it, but seeing as how he's such a good typist he could be my personal secretary. Answer the phone, bash out my reviews — that kind of thing.

It's decided then. We've come to an agreement and I now realise how fond of him I am. No home should be without one. Why not ask Activision if they'll give you one too?

Mike Pattenden

Graphics	★★★
Sound	★★★
Toughness	N/A
Staying Power	★★★★★
Value	★★★★★

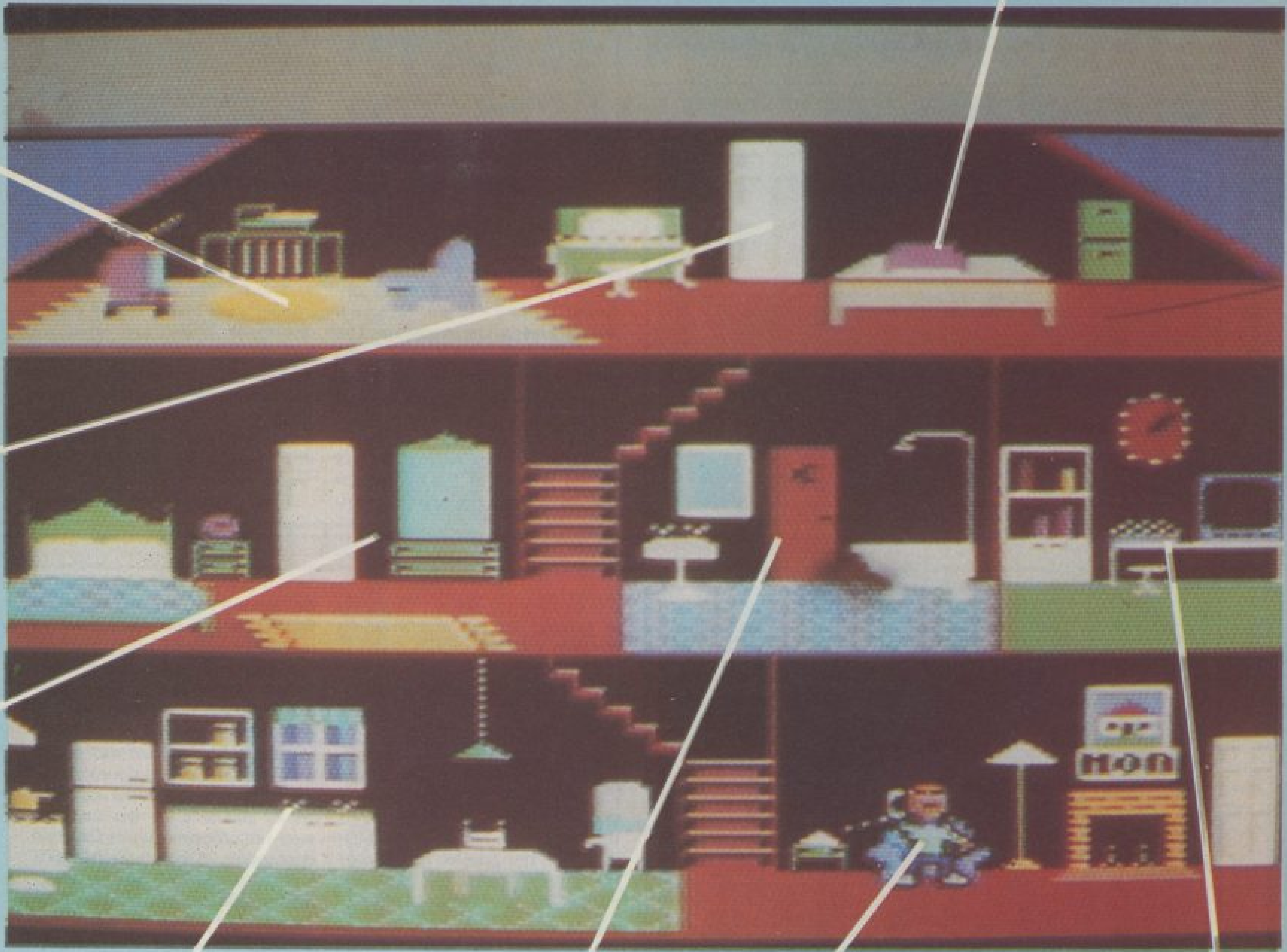
RECREATION ROOM: Bit of a gadgets man. Colour T.V., stereo (appalling taste in music) and piano. All LCPs are accomplished pianists. They're natural performers as well so they don't need much provocation to sit down and tickle the ivories.

THE CLOSET: Seems to be popular. LCPs frequently retire in here and remain out of sight for some time. No-one knows what they get up to. Even LCPs need privacy.

BEDROOM: He's not a great sleeper but if he does go for a kip you can always wake him up with the alarm clock.

...ter People

THE TYPEWRITER: He's a whizz at the keyboard. He has to be, because although he can speak, his burbles are indecipherable. His written English though is very good. Needs no prompting to sit down and fire off a few letters. Often very sarky ones.



THE KITCHEN: The way to an LCP's heart is through his stomach. Keep him well fed (and the dog) and top his water dispenser up regularly.

BATHROOM: Your pet person spends a lot of time in here. Must be all that water he drinks. Very hygienic with it. Get him to have a shower. (Ha ha).

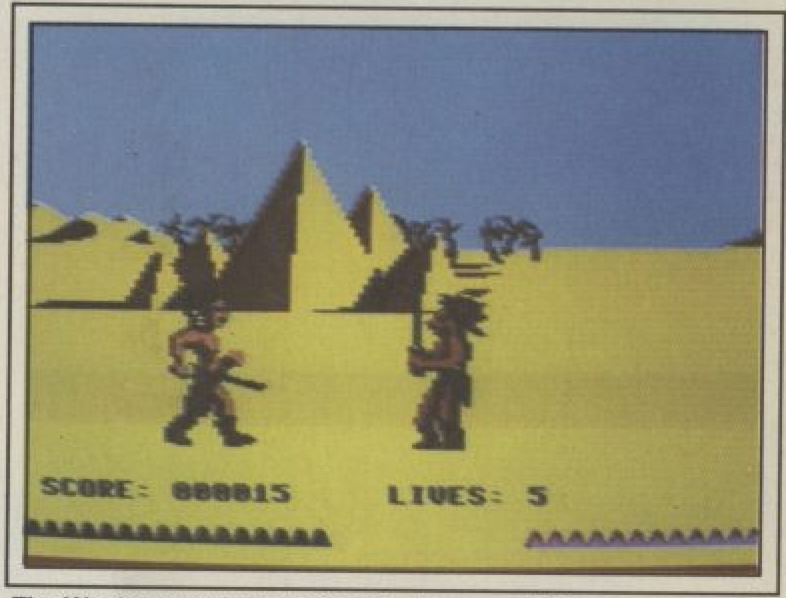
LIVING ROOM: Likes his armchair — possibly because this is where he gets petted. A lever extends from the wall to pat him fondly at the press of a couple of keys. The door leads out to a wood pile.

COMPUTER ROOM: Often sneaks in here for a quick shoot 'em up. It's a 64 of course. Lucky owners may spot his Commodore User collection on the bookshelf.

Fighting Warrior
Commodore 64
Melbourne House
Price: £7.95/cass

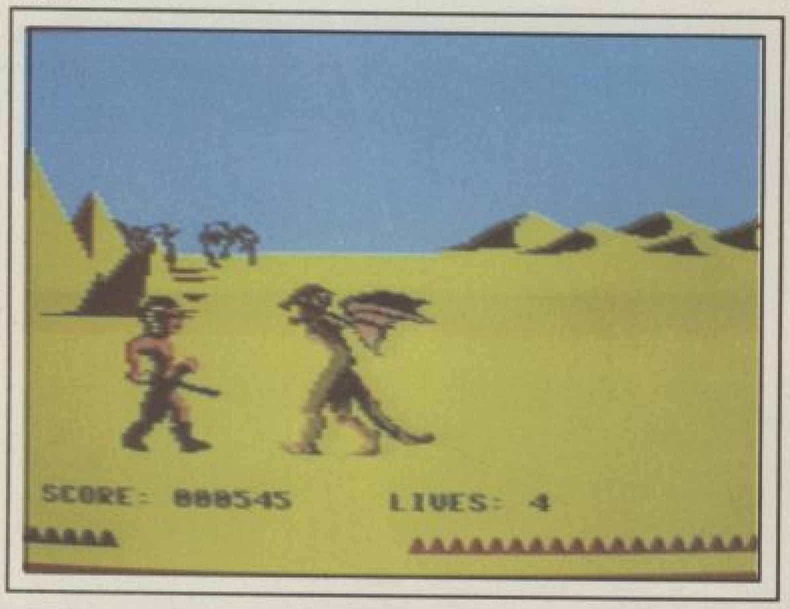
Violence seems to be a way of life at software houses these days. None more so than Melbourne House, who've already had a smash hit (geddit?) with *Exploding Fist* and have another biggy up their sleeves in the shape of *Rock and Wrestle*. If whacking a succession of living creatures to death is your idea of a relaxing evening, *Fighting Warrior* could be just the program you need.

The structure of the game is rather similar to Ariolasoft's *Karateka*, except that this time it's set in ancient Egypt. The idea is to battle through a sequence of scrolling screens in a bid to rescue a beautiful princess. Barring your way are various strange, violent creatures — the Egyptian equivalents to a werewolf, a dragon, a panther, an armoured knight, and so on.



The Warrior sword can swing up, down, and jab.

Below — the winged dragon is difficult to kill — 20 direct hits are required.



You have to despatch these in a series of one-to-one combats. At your disposal is a blunt sword which you can use in three different ways — a jab, an upper swing and a lower swing. The only other movement options (all joystick-controlled) are ducking, jumping and walking left or right — much less variety than in Fist.

The progress of a fight is revealed by two energy gauges at the bottom of the screen for you and your opponent. Every registered hit causes these to fall, and reaching zero means death for your opponent, or in your case the loss of one of five lives.

Should you survive a fight, a magic vase appears for you to swing at. If you can hit it you may be transported to a change of background and more advanced stage of the game, barren desert locations eventually giving way to the inside of a temple. It's up to you to learn which vases are worth swinging at.

Even though combat games



A.C.E.
Commodore 64
Cascade Games
Price: £10.95/cass

Most of the best flight simulators are a compromise between cockpit realism and entertaining, playable action. ACE (Air Combat Emulator) seems to have found the right balance very nicely indeed.

The depiction of the cockpit may not be as stunning as *Spitfire 40*, or *Dambusters*, the outside views may be a little crude, but the action itself is fast, compulsive and full of variety.

Perched behind the controls of an unidentified high performance jet, your mission is to wipe out an entire invasion force of tanks, anti-aircraft missiles, helicopter gunships, jet fighters and an offshore fleet. To do this you need to develop a host of skills: taking off and landing, refuelling in mid-air, dog-fights, correct targeting of ground forces, and avoiding missiles and anti-aircraft fire.

Each of these is pretty involved. For example mid-air refuelling requires you to manoeuvre behind a tanker plane at precisely its altitude and velocity. In dogfights you have the option of using cannon or air-to-air missiles and must make constant use of the special radar facility which indicates the precise position of the enemy craft. Missiles can either be outmanoeuvred or thrown off course by use of a limited number of flare decoys.

The instrument panel very effectively tells you all you need to know. As well as the radar screen, there are thrust, velocity and altitude gauges, a compass, roll and pitch indicators, a rear view camera and weapons selector. There's also a score indicator — an example of the sensible way the program won't take the constraints of reality too far.

Should you find all this information still doesn't stop you be-

The jet banks drastically as enemy missiles find their target.



are all the rage at present, this one has several limitations. For a start, although the various characters look suitably sinister, especially when they start whacking each other over the head, the graphics are blocky and lack the smoothness of the animation in *Fist*. The backgrounds aren't particularly special either.

More importantly, I found the combat itself became uninteresting very quickly. There aren't enough choices to allow you to develop detailed tactics. Although the different creatures don't all behave the same, most fights, especially against the "panther" and the winged creature, are a matter of simple brainless bloodletting, with the winner normally being the side which starts the fight with more energy.

If you're still thirsty for blood, maybe you should wait for *Rock and Wrestle* which, unlike this, is from the programmers of *Fist*.

Chris Anderson

Graphics	★★★
Sound	★★★
Toughness	★★★
Staying Power	★★★
Value	★★★

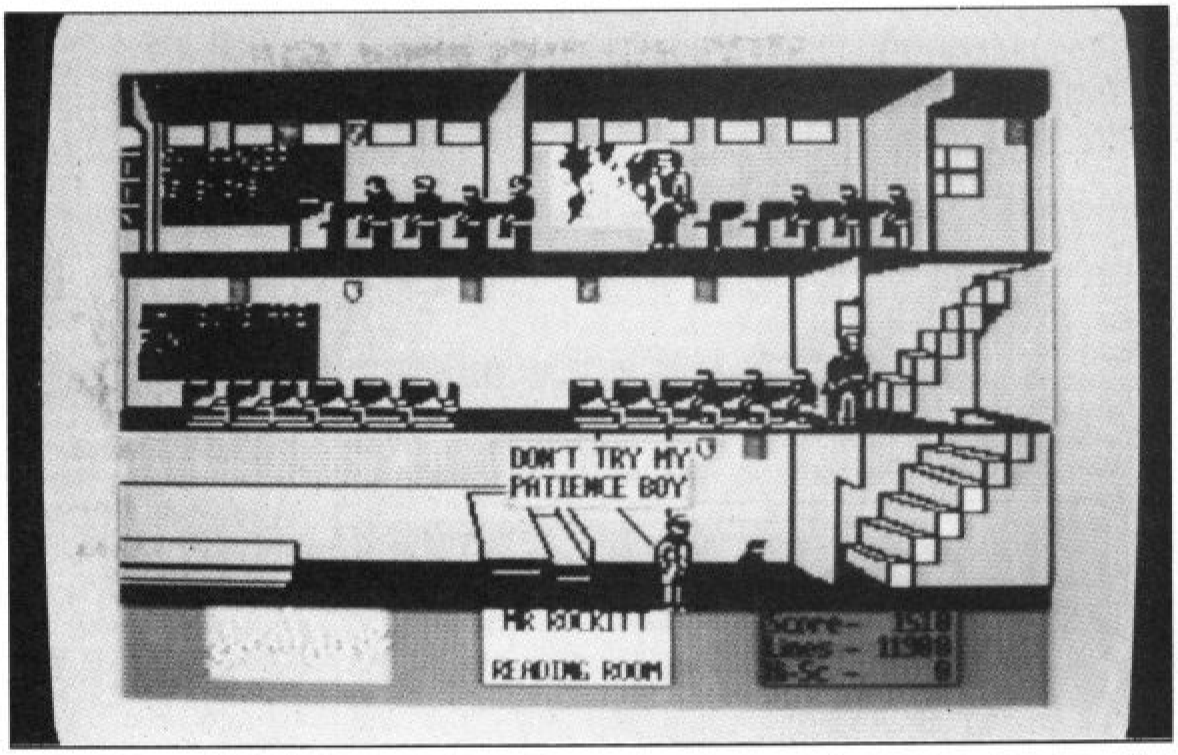
ing shot down or running out of fuel, you have the option of trying to guide the plane back over allied territory and ejecting. You can then continue the battle in another aircraft.

One of the program's main assets is its sound. Not only are there very realistic aircraft and battle noises, there's also speech, which is used by your on-board computer to say things like "Missile warning" and "Low altitude". Although the speech is fairly crude, it does sound remarkably like aircraft cockpit radiospeak, thereby adding considerably to the atmosphere. And for once it isn't a gimmick — the speech gives you important information.

Until now Cascade Games have made their money sending out mail order tapes stuffed with vast numbers of pretty lousy programs. This is an impressive entry into the world of real software. It's a bit expensive but you do get a watch into the bargain.

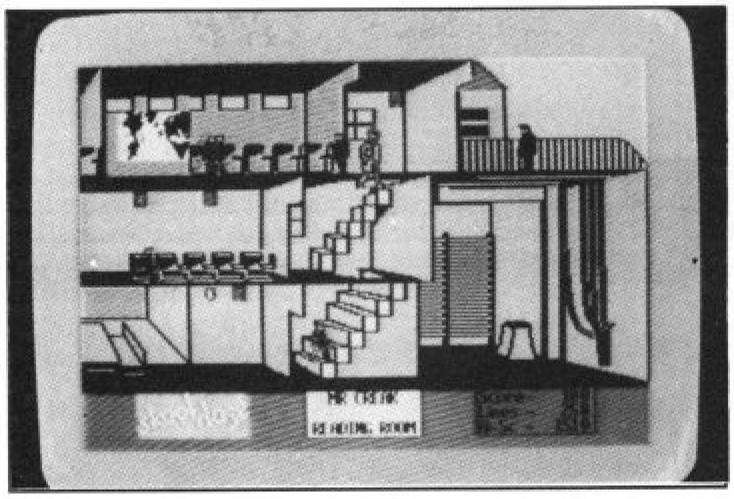
Chris Anderson

Graphics	★★★
Sound	★★★★
Toughness	★★★★★
Staying Power	★★★★★
Value	★★★★



The Headmaster gets angry — Adrian and Pandora wouldn't let their teachers talk to them like this.

Skool Daze
Commodore 64
Microsphere
Price: £8.95/cass



Above — stay out of the gym — no points there.

Spectrum owners raved about *Skool Daze* when it appeared last year. Now you can join in the fun as Microsphere have just completed the 64 conversion.

The action takes place in a strict boys' school where lines are handed out like they were going out of fashion.

Skool Daze is a sort of levels and ladders game but it has a hell of a lot more to it than that. The basic idea is to stay out of trouble, avoid getting lines, and increase your score.

Points are earned by jumping up and touching the shields that are hanging on the walls all over the school. It is not always easy to reach the shields and you may have to knock down a pupil or teacher to stand on to give you the extra reach.

Opening the safe in the headmaster's room also earns you extra points. It's not easy though — you will need to crack the code to get in.

The teachers bark out tellings-off from speech bubbles. The headmaster, for example, turns up from time to time in the corridors and threatens to "cane the whole lot of you if you don't keep quiet". Mr Whacker stalks the corridor with his cane in his hand ready to punish anyone who steps out of line.

It's not just strict teachers that you have to watch out for. The bully is always ready to sock you in the mouth, or shoot you with his catapult. The Swot and Boy Wander will tell lies about you to the teachers as well — which can result in even more lines. It would never happen in Grange Hill — that's all I can say.

Eugene Lacey

Graphics	★★★★
Sound	★★★★
Toughness	★★★★
Staying Power	★★★★
Value	★★★★



This stern looking teacher is not Mr Whacker from *Skool Daze* come to life.

It is, in fact, the proud programmer — David Reidy.

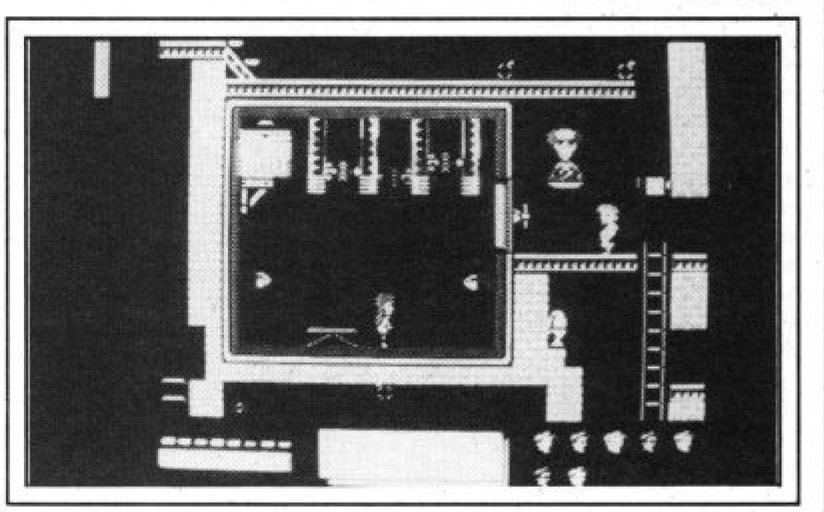
Mr Reidy — or Sir as he prefers to be called — thinks that one of the best bits of *Skool Daze* is that you can alter the names of the teachers at the beginning of the game, giving the nicknames of the teachers at your school.

Sir has kindly donated five copies of *Skool Daze* to the G-Force. These will be given to the readers who send us the funniest nicknames of school teachers. You must tell us how the name came about.

Don't worry about getting into trouble with your teacher as we also have a secret prize to keep them sweet. (Psst. I hear from a reliable source that it's a signed photo of Keith Joseph.)

Entries should be sent to Teachers' Nicknames, Commodore User, Priory Court, 30-32 Farringdon Lane, London EC1R 3AU.

Dynamite Dan
Commodore 64
Mirrorsoft
Price: £7.95/cass

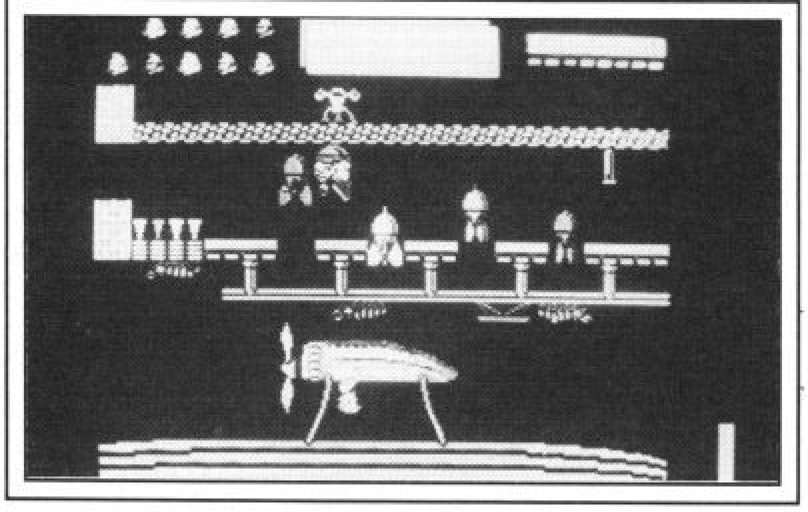


It's Dynamite Dan to the rescue as the evil Doctor Blitzen threatens the world with his Super Psychon Mega-Ray. Dan is the super spy hero of this platform-style arcade adventure.

The plans for the Mega-Ray have been sealed in a safe by the Doc's glamorous assistant — the inscrutable Donna. To get at the blueprints Dan has to locate eight sticks of dynamite hidden all over Blitzen's rambling cliff-top hideaway. The explosives can be used to blast the safe so that Dan can grab the plans and escape in his hot air balloon.

First impressions of *Dynamite Dan* are likely to be yawns of "Oh no, not another platform game". It would be a pity to dismiss it for this reason alone as it is an excellent implementation of an admittedly hackneyed theme.

Lots of nasties inhabit the rooms requiring really precise leaps and planning. Mapping is also essential if you are to avoid getting lost. There are lifts and moving platforms to ride on, providing a welcome rest from the hazards of exploring on foot.



What sets this game apart from the dozens of other games are the excellence of the graphics and animation. The colours are razor sharp and the movement of objects is flawless. Another nice touch is that each time you play the sticks of dynamite, food, and other objects you need to collect are left in different positions.

One of the disappointments of the game is that it is simply a left, right, jumper — utilising only three of the keys. It would have been nice to have some other actions — say a gun, or a couple of Bond-style gadgets at the ready. But this is not to detract from what is a nice, simple and incredibly addictive game. I'm not ashamed to say that this platform game kept me glued to the screen for an entire weekend.

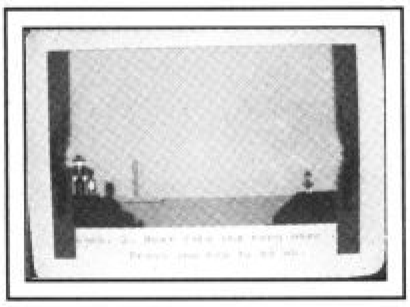
Eugene Lacey

Graphics	★★★★
Sound	★★★
Toughness	★★★★
Staying Power	★★★
Value	★★★★

Magic
Commodore 64
Macmillan Software
Price: £8.95/cass

If I was a magician I would make this piece of software disappear. Why? Because it's a rip-off. It's got nothing to do with magic, bar the title. The respected magicians' group — the Magic Circle — ought to be ashamed to be associated with it.

The box blurb claims you can: "Use your computer to rehearse a range of great tricks". In actual fact, all the software does is turn your 64 into a glorified calculator. Not a very good one at that, as you have to do most of the sums for the 'puzzles' on a separate piece of paper.

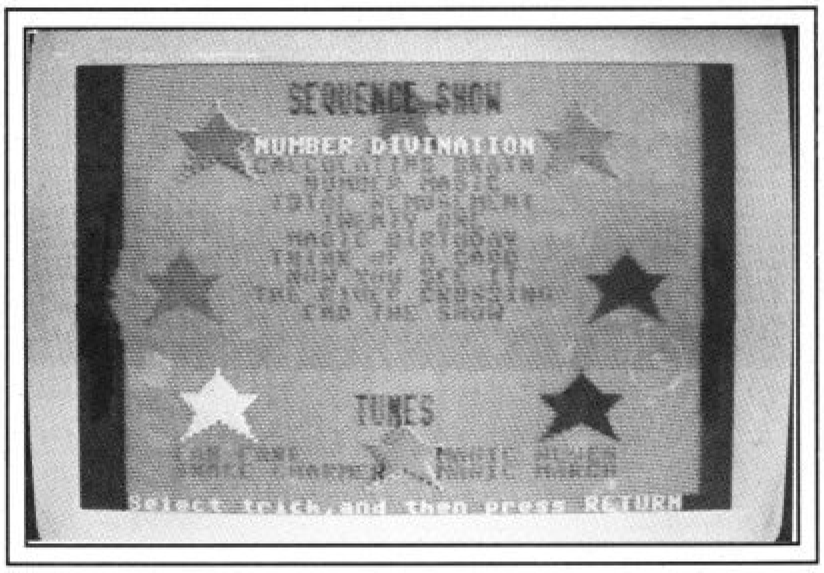


What have these puzzles got to do with magic? Well you might ask, for only three of the eight 'tricks' can really be called magic at all. One of these, a choose-a-card type trick, is reasonably good, but you really don't need a computer and piece of software to do it. A pack of cards and a book from the Public Library is just as effective — more so, in fact, as you probably won't have your 64 with you the next time you go on holiday, or a long train journey.

One of the challenges on the tape is a logic puzzle in which you have to get a farmer, his chicken, bag of corn, and his fox safely to the other side of the river on one raft without the chicken eating the corn, or fox eating the chicken. No — I don't know what a farmer wants with a fox either.

Each trick has a menu for you to choose: *Rehearse, Magic*, or *Magicians' Tips*. Magic explains how the trick works, Tips tells you how to present it, and Rehearse is (surprise, surprise) a rehearsal of all the stages.

The problem with each trick is that when you have chosen one you are stuck with it. To get another you have to reload the tape.



A 36-page booklet is also in the box. This teaches you another 18 tricks with words and pictures. The trouble with this is that it does not interact with the software in any way — as you might expect. You will be able to learn a few tricks from it but as a book on magic it must be considered a bit thin to say the least.

Overall I was disappointed with *Magic*. The price, packaging, and Magic Circle endorsement led me to expect a lot more.

Eugene Lacey

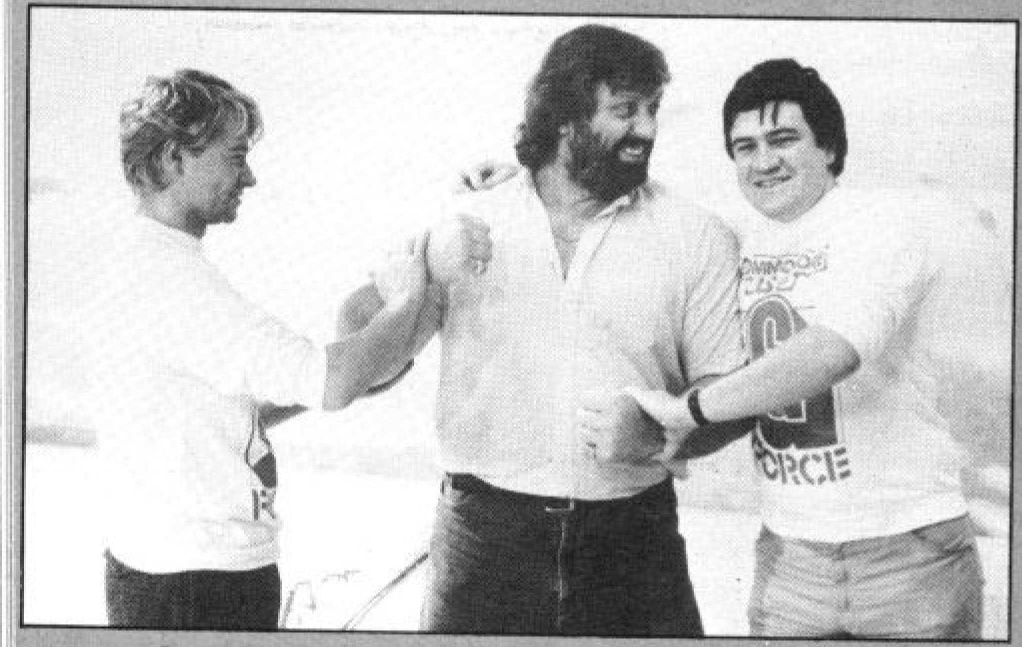
Graphics	★★
Sound	★★
Toughness	★
Staying Power	
Value	★

Geoff Capes recently demonstrated his game on the new TV programme Splash.

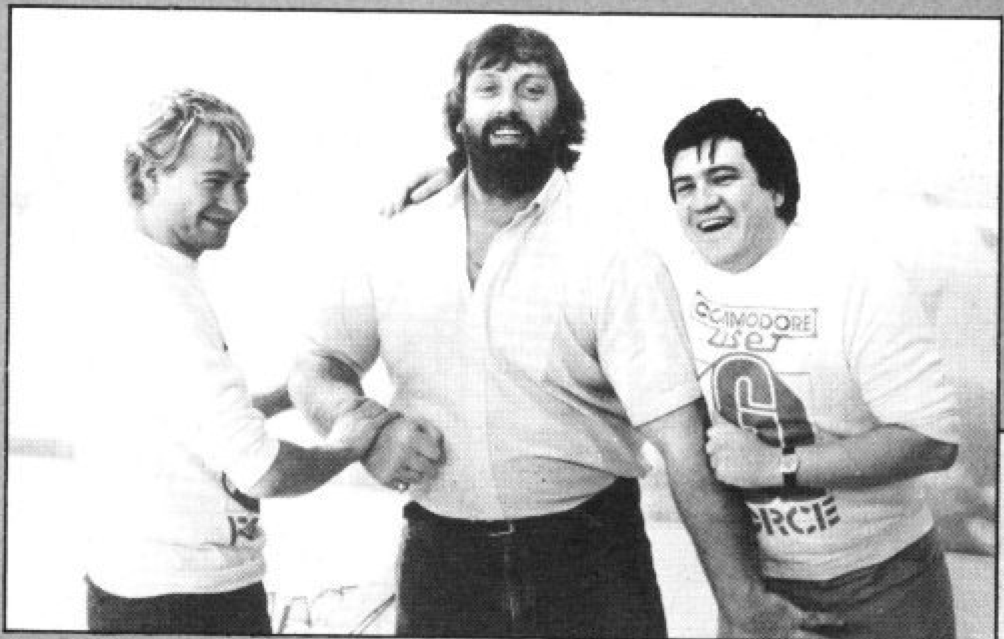
Two G Force members were there to tackle him afterwards to quiz him on his comments to the viewers that the game "is very realistic and playable".

To win one of ten free copies we have to give away write in and tell us the names of the other three famous sporting personalities featured on Splash the same day as Geoff.

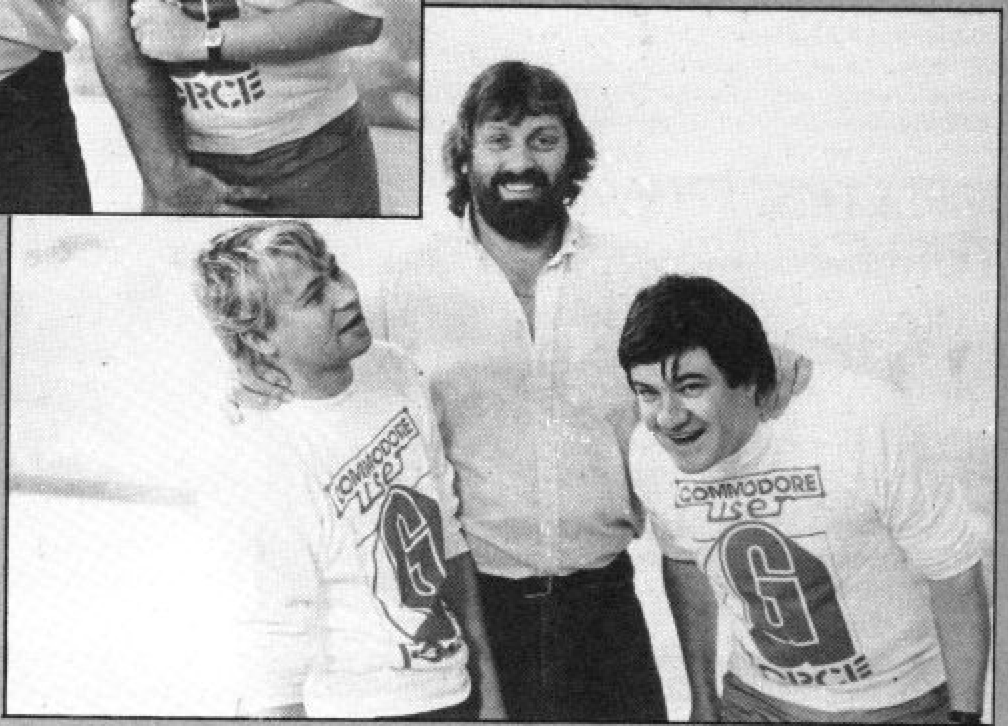
Capes' Capers



Geoff Capes chances a right as our Ed makes a puny bid to hold on to that powerful left.



Geoff easily shakes him off with a reach for, er, his knee caps. But Hot Shot Mike Pattenden is still hanging on.



Two investigative reporters get their heads knocked together by one celebrity who ain't standing for no press harrassment.

Of the dozens of games now available with famous names on them, Geoff Capes Strong Man is more directly to do with that which Mr Capes is famous for than most other name-games.

Six strong man events are on the tape: the Truck Pull, Barrel Loading, Sumo Wrestling, Log Chopping, Ringing the Bell (the Hit a pin with a mallet — fairground game) and Tug O' War.

Your man on screen is a miniature bearded Geoff Capes.

To make him perform the various events you must move a screen cursor to the icons that represent Geoff's main muscles.

By correctly following the sequence of flashing muscle-icons and pressing the fire button you slowly make Geoff perform.

The quicker you follow the sequence the more energy Geoff has in his limbs and the quicker he will perform.

The amount of energy available for use depends on your performance in the energy test at the beginning of the game.

This is a good old joystick jerker — a la Daley Thompson's Decathlon.

The amount of energy you earn at this stage — indicated by a bar chart at the bottom of the screen — governs the amount of energy you can allocate to the various muscles in each of the events.

The screen shots that you see in this preview were taken off an Amstrad as the Commodore version was not quite finished when the magazine went to press.

Look out for a full G-Force review of Geoff Capes' game in next month's issue.



Geoff solves the problem of wheel clamping.



Put the hammer down to ring that bell.



Roll out the barrel and onto the truck.

ROCK'N WRESTLE

Rock'n Wrestle–the first truly 3 dimensional combat sports simulation game. Dynamic graphics, state-of-the-art animation, 1 and 2 player mode, brilliant gameplay, 10 different opponents and complete rock sound track. More joystick moves than you imagined possible–over 25–including the atomic drop, aeroplane spin, piledriver, body slam, back breaker, arm twist, elbow drop and turnbuckle fly.

Rock'n Wrestle–the challenge begins here!

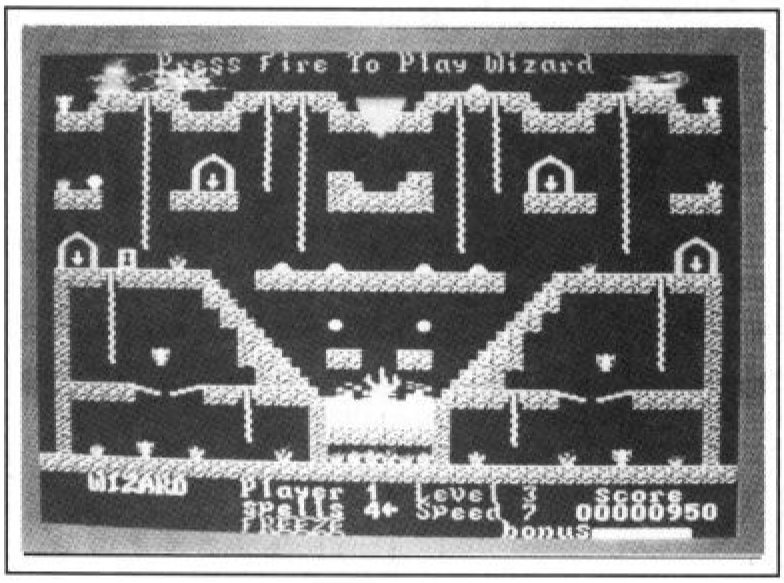
Available for Spectrum £8.95, C64 and Amstrad £9.95.



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Wizard
Commodore 64/128
Ariolasoft
Price: £9.95/cass £12.95/disk

A platform game is a platform game is a platform game. *Wizard* is a platform game. Nothing wrong with that. Every now and then another one turns up that is so good it puts all the others in the shade. *Monty on the Run* for example.

Wizard isn't quite in the Monty mould, but it does have a few notable characteristics which set it apart. The game itself is typical platform fare. You control Wilfred Wizard — up and down ropes, 45 degree walls, ladders etc. Wilfred likes to collect bars of gold, pearls, chalices etc. from obscure parts of the screen. Ghosts, monsters, zombies etc. try to thwart him. So far so predictable.

When you get fed up with one screen, by collecting a key and taking it to the keyhole you can move on to the next. The keys also give Wilfred the power to cast spells. He can become invisible (which tends to hinder you, rather than anyone else), teleport himself and hurl fireballs and numerous other things.

There are forty screens to work your way through, but if that's not enough then you can construct your own. Either starting with a clear screen or by altering one of the existing ones you can build walls, hang ropes, position treasure, keys and animated monsters, define Wilfred's starting position and the number of spells he has. Ariola hardly mention this facility on the packaging which is surprising considering it's probably the game's only outstanding feature.

There are actually a couple of other things worthy of a mention. As well as six different levels, *Wizard* also has ten different speeds. So if things are a little slow you can zip 'em up. There is also a top ten roll of honour which automatically saves to disk.

Just to end on a sour note. Each screen loads separately, which is fine if you're using a disk drive but could be tedious for cassette users.

Ken McMahon

Graphics	★★★
Sound	★★★
Toughness	★★★
Staying Power	★★★
Value	★★★

Scarabaeus
Commodore 64/128
Ariolasoft
Price: £9.95/cass £12.95/disk

Scarabaeus is the fabulous emerald jewel of the Pharaoh. Being something of a materialist and not wanting to go without in the afterworld, he's had it buried with him. You, being more concerned with riches in this world, are out to rob him of it. This task, however, is not without its dangers.

The first mortal threat hits you pretty early on when you are bitten by a venomous spider. Fortunately, death is not instant as this would make the game pretty shortlived.

Scarabaeus is basically a 3D maze on three levels, but there is much more to it than simply finding your way around. On level one you must accumulate nine hieroglyphics which form a 3 × 3 grid or key which is used on level two. The hieroglyphics are obtained by capturing the ghost which wanders the maze — not a difficult task since pulling the joystick back provides a map showing exactly where he is. This shouldn't take more than a couple of minutes and you can then take the lift to level two.

Now things get complicated. This maze is dotted with niches in which you will find potions and zombie traps. You must select the eight good potions (spider bite antidote) which are indicated by a panel matching your hieroglyphic key. WARNING! Selecting the wrong potion can seriously damage your health, as can being caught by the spiders which guard the niches.

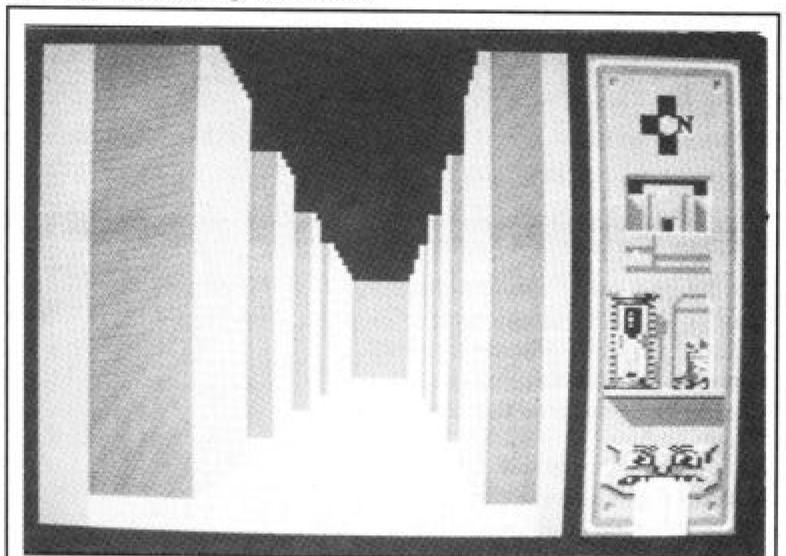
Nearly there! Now all you have to do is open one of the eight doors to the Pharoah's tomb on level three. This is done by moving hieroglyphs on the centre columns so they match the outside ones, rather like one of those little plastic word puzzles. Before you can do this, though, there is some more medicine to find and, of course, you have to watch out for the zombies.

As a game in its own right *Scarabaeus* rates pretty well. The graphics are good — I was particularly impressed with the 'scrollerama' maze. However, comparisons are bound to be made with Ultimate's *Entombed*, which for my money is by far the better game, at least in terms of graphics. Perhaps *Scarabaeus* will appeal to the more cerebral games enthusiast.

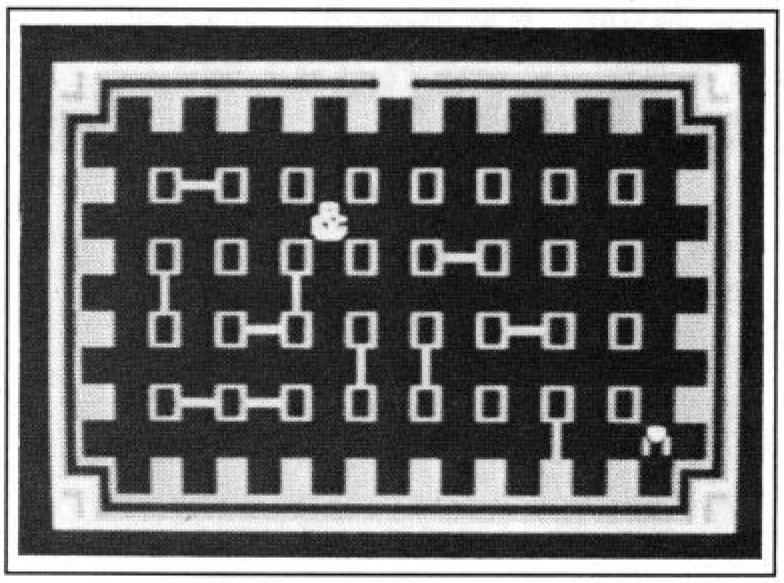
Ken McMahon

Graphics	★★★★
Sound	★★★
Toughness	★★★
Staying Power	★★★
Value	★★★

If the ghost is proving elusive . . .



. . . the map reveals his whereabouts.



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DOUBLE CASSETTE £9·95



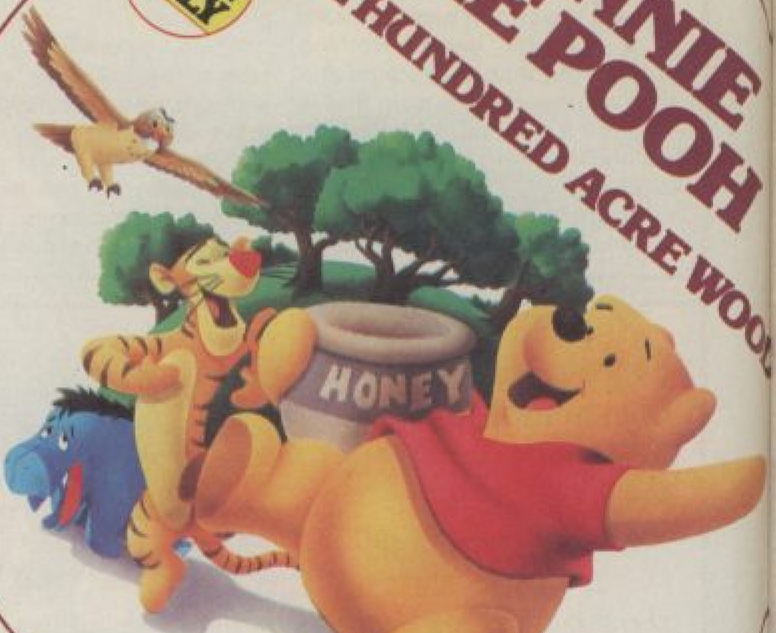
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CBM 64 £12·95 DISK

kids!

U.S. GOLD

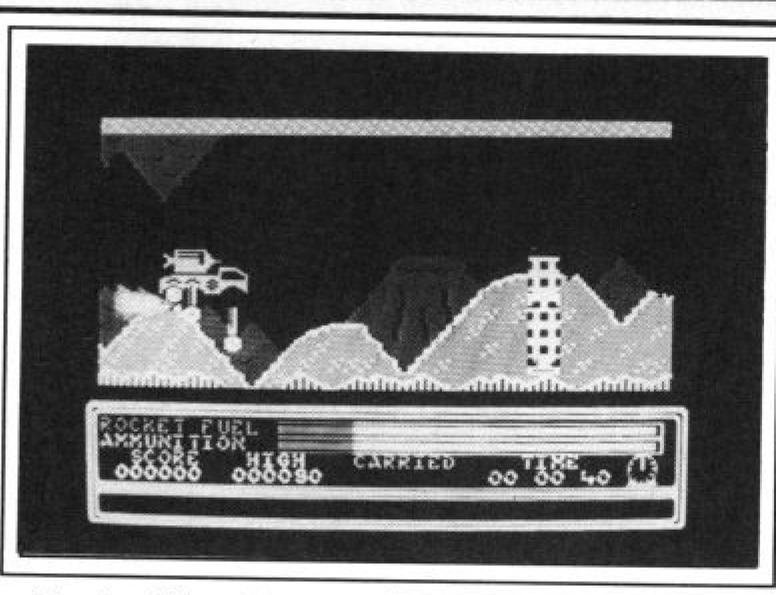
Zyto
Commodore 64
Rabbit
Price: £3.99/cass

Just like a Christmas pud, all the familiar ingredients are in there . . . somewhere. What Rabbit (Virgin's new 'better than yer average cheapie' label) have cooked-up is a spacey arcade adventure, biased towards action, which is really rather good and doesn't betray its 'half price' tag at all.

Mean, death-dealing brute that you are, your latest hankering is to guide a lethal war machine (actually it's a quaint combination of buggy and roving rocket) down through the six levels of a subterranean fortress till you reach the soft underbelly of the omnipotent, oppressive empire where you get to cut loose with your laser, pulverising their floating city.

If you manage to fly through the patterned control panels in a particular manner you will crack a code which in turn cuts off the electricity supply. Beware, the defences can be turned back on by sloppy flying! Collisions, either with the cave walls or defender craft, make the rocket progressively more difficult to handle. To complicate matters further, six segments of a bomb have to be assembled just outside the final protective barrier prior to the final shoot-up.

There's quite a lot to this game. Your power packs need refreshing and you can't leave the buggy unprotected for too long. Shooting, flying skills, code breaking and just a dab of humour add to the feeling that there's four quid well spent here.



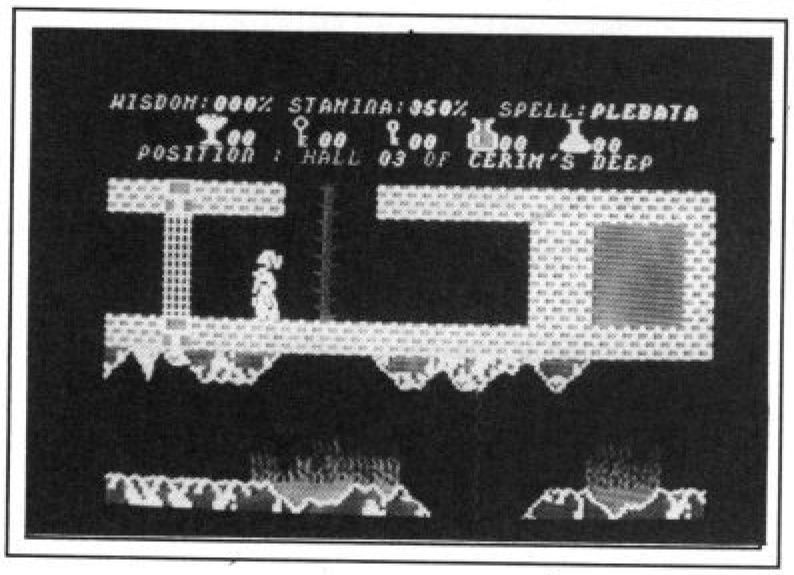
Laurie Sampson

Graphics	★★★
Sound	★★
Toughness	★★★
Staying Power	★★★★
Value	★★★★★

Doriath
Commodore 64
Rabbit
Price: £3.99/cass

Split fairly and squarely between adventure and arcade, this game is sufficiently well presented to summon up that mood of Dungeons and Dragons.

Forget any notion about this game being tailored to a low price, you even get "Hall of the Mountain King" as musical accompaniment, with no skimping on pictorial features either. Among the nasty natural phenomena that smite the unwary on every screen are spurting geysers, corrosive droplets and showers of sparks.



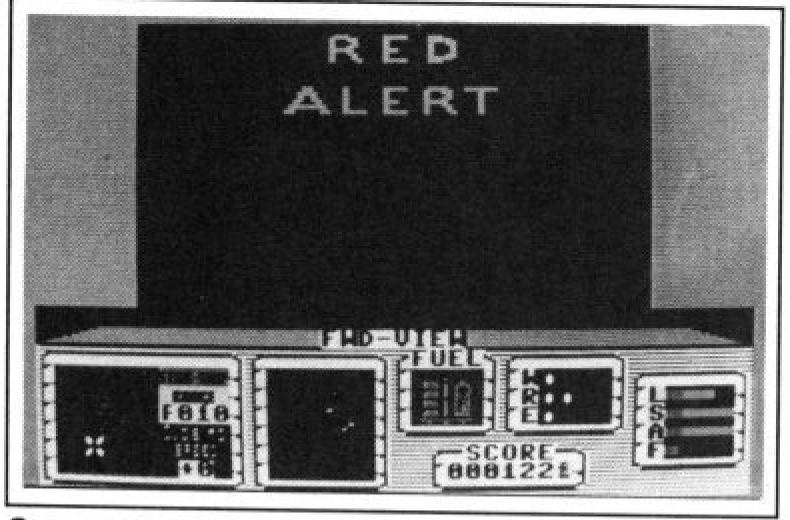
You start off in hall number two, with a full complement of energy, one spell and a hazy notion that someone, somewhere is guarding a coronet. Spells can be hurled with great effect to vapourise various sentries. However, like *Sorcery*, you need to collect a library of spells to overcome your various foes. I've never come across "fungata potions" before, but now I realise (silly me!) that these are of prime importance in counteracting the narcotic effects of magic mushrooms (did someone mention Charles Goodwin?).

Eventually you build up a picture of the geography of the underground kingdom and start to assemble the clues, in the shape of scroll fragments.

A good helping of entertainment for those itching to get lost in a labyrinth.

Laurie Sampson

Graphics	★★★
Sound	★★★
Toughness	★★★★
Staying Power	★★★★
Value	★★★★



Space Hunter
Commodore 64
Mastertronic
Price: £1.99/cass

All the food has run out back on Earth and the folks are getting hungry. So they send you, the young rookie pilot, in search of enough Big Macs (no pickle, large fries) to feed the whole planet. Such culinary delights, referred to in the game as food, are to be found on the huge transporters which roam the galaxy. The radar and tracking computer tell you where the food transporters are, then it's up to you to navigate a course.

Now you must roam the ship on your *Strangeloop* style robo bike in search of a bite for the folks back home. While you're there you may as well help yourself to the odd bits of equipment carelessly left about the place. Of course, it's not simply a case of grab it and run, the transporter's guards will do their best to bump into you and deplete your energy reserves.

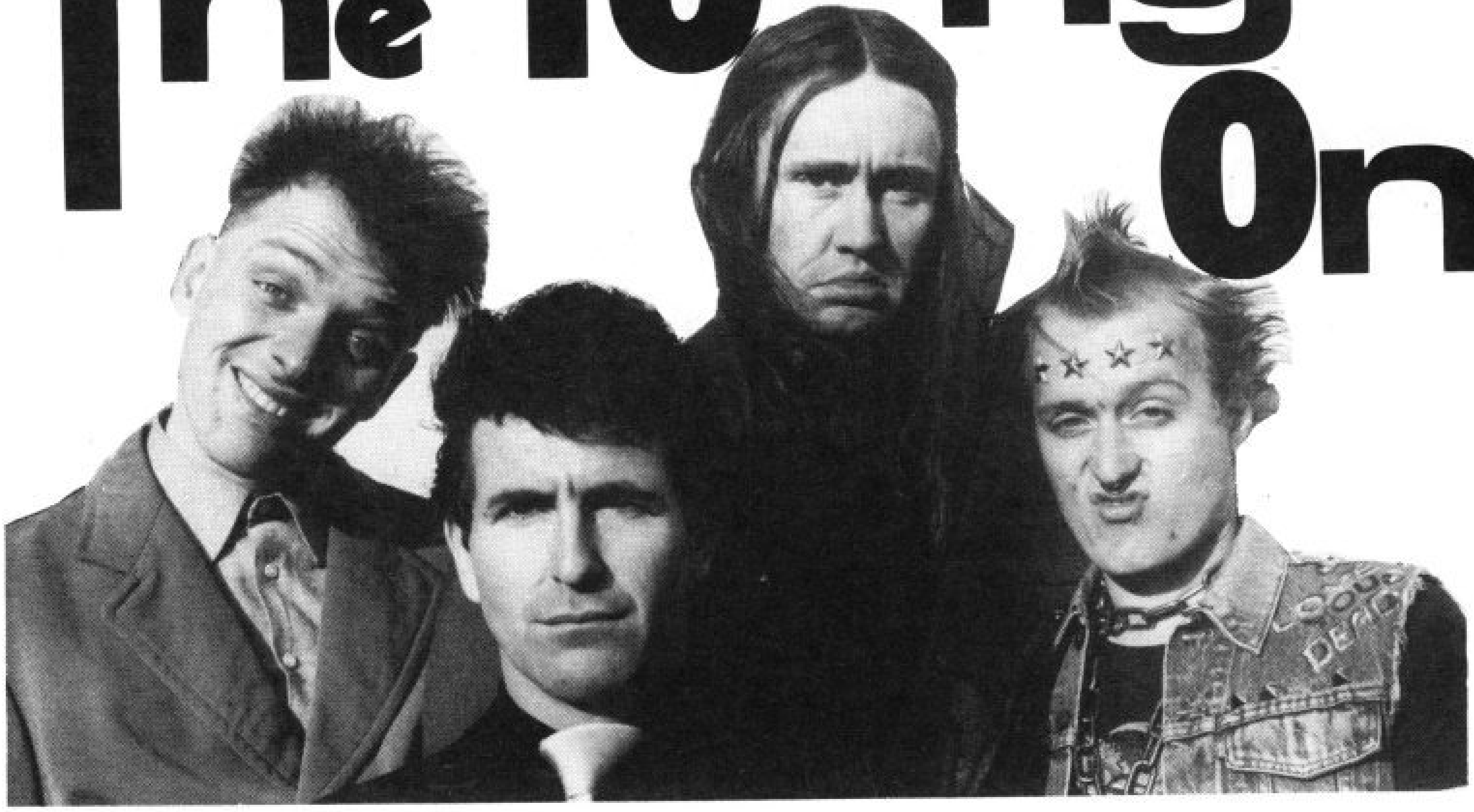
Your shopping spree completed, it's time to head back to the ship and go in search of another transporter. At this point I was beginning to get a little bored when, whammo! — I was beset by marauding alien ships in their hordes. The aliens put paid to my space exploits several times before I discovered the perfect battle plan which, to put it mildly, was a stroke of genius. I threw the ship into maximum reverse thrust, giving me more time to pick the attackers off. Once they get behind you, you're done for.

For two pounds, Earth money, *Space Hunter* must be one of the best quality low-priced games in the galaxy.

Ken McMahon

Graphics	★★★
Sound	★★
Toughness	★★★
Staying Power	★★★
Value	★★★★★

The Young Ones



Somebody had to do it, somebody had to try and turn a cult sitcom loony TV program into a computer game. Are Orpheus mad in attempting to convert the humour of the Young Ones into pixels? Mike 'the cool person' Pattenden headed off to a converted smithy in the rural centre of Hatley St George in the middle of nowhere to see if it could be done.

It took a couple of series before most people latched on to the crazed lives of *The Young Ones*. Once they had, mind, everyone was going round behaving like Rik, calling each other 'complete and utter' wotsits and moaning about 'heavy bummers'.

It was shortly afterwards that two devotees decided to write a computer game around the programme. John Marshall and Paul Kaufman loved every minute of the series and coincidentally Paul just happened to be the Managing Director of Orpheus and John the programmer of the company's faerie hit *Elidon*.

Funny haha

"It was a daunting prospect I admit", explains an elegantly quiffed John Marshall, "Humour can't be programmed in 4×4 blocks". It was made harder by the fact that they had to educate the Young Ones about computers. "They thought an arcade game was something you put ten pence in whilst you were in the pub", says Paul.

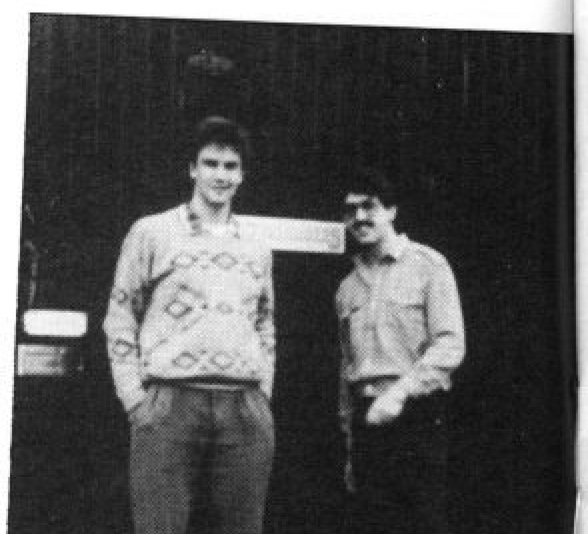
Not that the game is a simple arcade job involving Rik leaping around platforms picking up keys. God forbid I should ever have to review another of those. Anyone who saw the demo at the PCW Show will have a vague idea but for those of you who didn't (most of you I expect) it's an arcade-cum-adventure sort of thing along those lines. Know what I mean?

Think of a cross between *Spy vs Spy* and everything you've heard about Activision's Computer Person game, then forget I ever mentioned them. "Actually I think David Crane could have gone further with that game," John takes up my point, "We've got four characters doing what his pet person does." It should be four times better then, on that basis, but I doubt if it could be that good.

The plot

Basically you choose to be one of the four characters in the series and the computer controls the rest. You have a task to do, but you are not told what it is, though you are given hints.

The screen depicts the ground and first floor of the house. Doors lead to



Marshall and Kaufman.



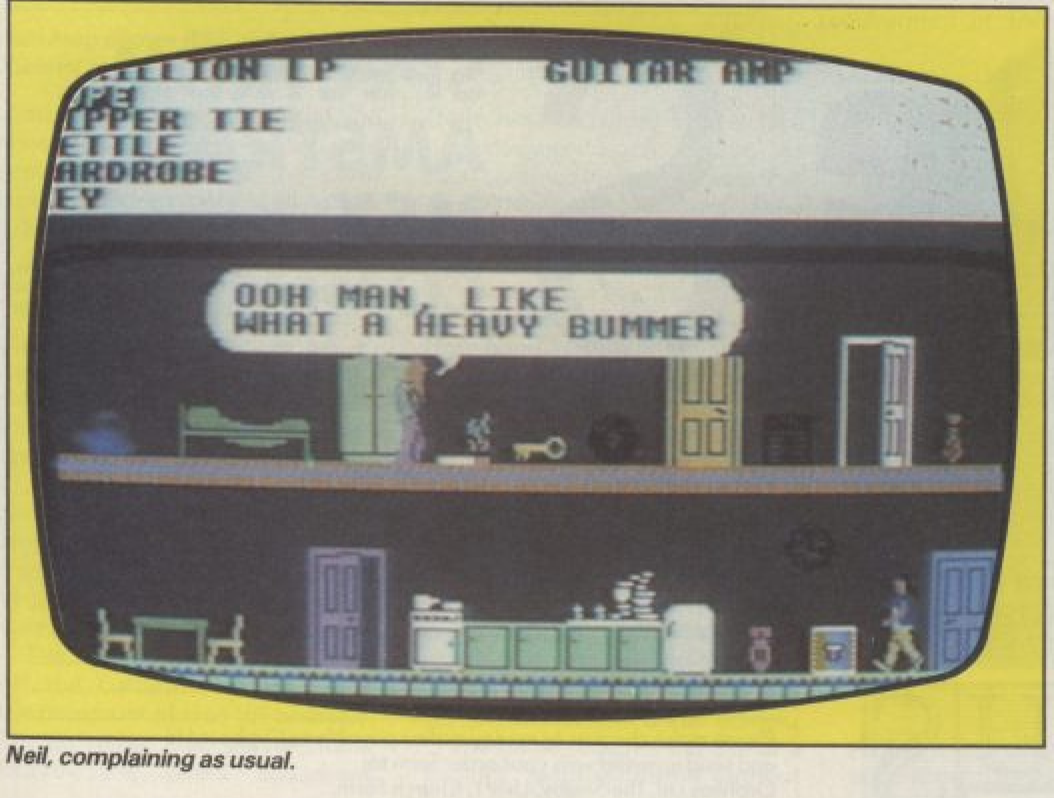
We always suspected Mike of good taste, but what more can you expect from a hippy?

halls and stairs and to other rooms, but this is not an exercise in mapping ability. The top of the screen tells you what you are carrying at the time. You may perform three essential things: walk, talk and perform an action [such as hitting someone.] These are selected with the joystick and performed automatically. Talking is keyed in and appears in the form of speech bubbles.

"We tried to take the stock characteristics of *The Young Ones* as people and transfer them to the game. Above all else they wanted the style of the series retained", says John, "and I think you'll find we've done that." How do all four characters interact, though, I asked, bemused.

I'll be your puppet

The key to it all is a system called the *Puppetmaster*, a sort of personality module that controls the speech, memory and actions of the characters. It works on a score system that is never displayed.



Neil, complaining as usual.

Characters will do things that score heavily for them, each has a different criteria for scoring. Thus Vyvian has a low boredom threshold; he tires easily of things. He picks them up and discards them quickly.

"When the system was originally created it was too anarchic. The characters would go around smashing everything up and then stand there looking bemused", laughs John. I suspect he would have been happy to leave it that way. Be warned though it's still possible to antagonise the others so much that they stop you from completing the game.

All the characters have a stock reaction, Vyv will head-butt, Rik will stick two fingers up, but the way such an action is received depends on to whom it's done. This is the personality module's memory in action. So if you stick two fingers up at Vyv he may well go and smash your room up.

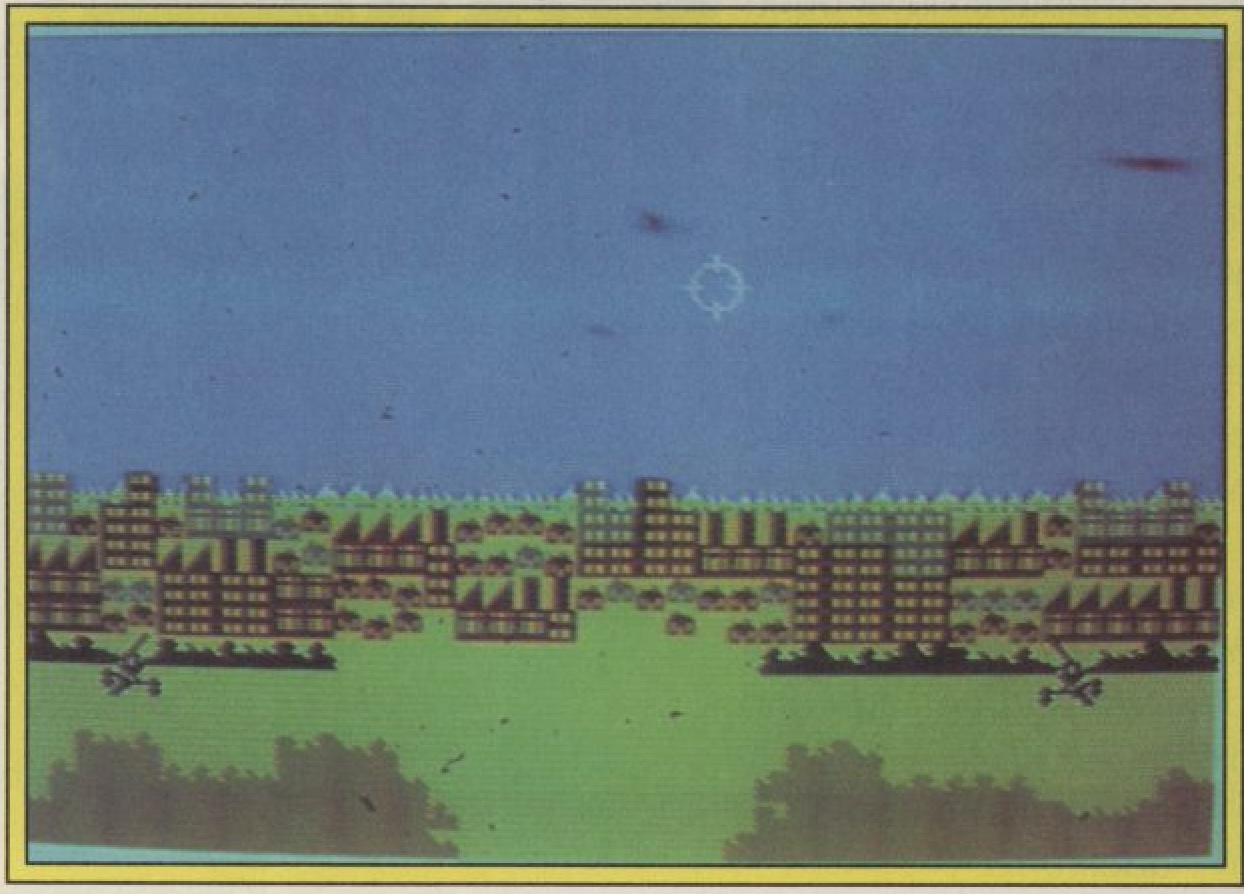
All the ingredients are there right down to SPG the hamster [who regularly ends up in the toaster] now all that remains is to see if all works as well together as it sounds in theory. Quite a lot in other words, but I can tell you that it's looking good. I was certainly amused to go into a room and find that Neil's guitar amp was buried in a hole in the floor while he'd [I'd] been out.

If you want to know for sure though, you'll just have to wait until we review the final version, won't you, nazi!



THE
YOUNG
ONES
extra corresp
ly fish

Battle of Britain
Commodore 64
PSS
Price: £9.95/cass

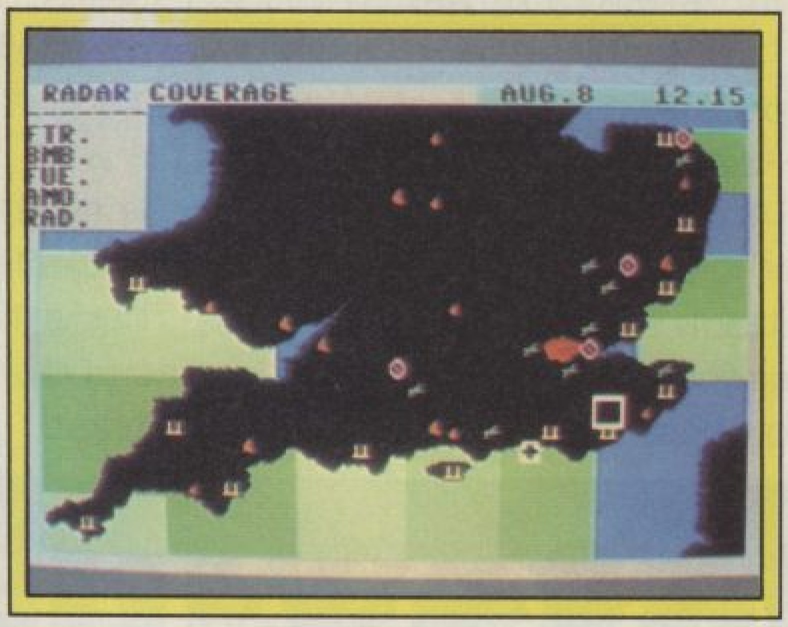


London takes a pounding from the Luftwaffe in one of the arcade screens.

Battle of Britain is the latest release in PSS's Wargamers series, which includes *Battle for Midway* and *Theatre Europe*. You control Fighter Command, directing the 18 squadrons which stood between Britain and the Luftwaffe threat.

The game is an unusual combination of arcade action and a strategy game. Such combinations have had limited success in the past, but this one is most effective. Unlike many strategic games, the 'dead time' spent waiting for the computer to do something is kept to a minimum — there are always orders to be given or situations to check on.

The incoming squadrons of Luftwaffe aircraft have three prime targets: airfields, radar bases and cities. The game has been programmed to reflect the



Main map shows RAF airfields and German raiders coming in over the Channel to the east of the Isle of Wight.

actual Luftwaffe strategy of the time, but this does not decrease replayability because the computer responds very well to the player's own actions.

Once loaded, you are offered several options: a training game (recommended even if you are a strategy game expert or an arcade game buff), 'Blitzkreig', which reflects one heavy day's mass assault, and the 'Campaign Game', which covers the whole of the Battle of Britain. All these give the player the choice of including arcade action or not, and there are three different speeds at which to play the Campaign Game.

The basic objective is to beat off the Luftwaffe attacks with the minimum of loss (of course!). To do this, the player must launch and direct squadrons from nine airfields, taking into consideration such factors as fuel, ammunition and weather conditions. Squadrons take losses in combat and the game comes across as a highly fluid one, with units shifting constantly and airfields taking damage from bombing runs so as to make it more difficult to land squadrons at them.

The arcade action option comes into play whenever a British squadron intercepts a Luftwaffe probe or when an airfield comes under attack. In the first case, the action is through a simple flight combat simulator with some very smooth graphics. In the second case, the player controls an anti-aircraft gun on the airfield under attack.

The game requires the use of a joystick, both with and without the arcade option. Unit movement is performed by placing the cursor over the unit and selecting options with the fire button.

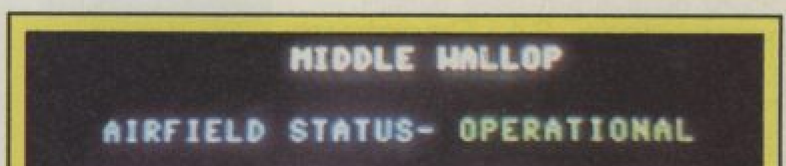
In terms of graphics, the game is attractive and the arcade sequences are smooth but short. The game is played on a map of southern England and the unit markers are clear and easy to read. Status of units and airfields is displayed in a window when the cursor is placed over them, and other messages appear on the top two lines of the screen.

Drawbacks: This is a one-player game with no option to control the Luftwaffe. The requirement of using a joystick seems slightly unnecessary — keys could have been used to obtain the same results, although to be fair some of the action is so fast that a joystick is better.

Overall this is an enjoyable and absorbing game with a good balance between reflex and strategy gaming. Recommended.

Jon Sutherland

Graphics	★★★★
Sound	★★★★
Toughness	★★★
Staying Power	★★★★
Value	★★★★



Airfield information screen shows that 15 Spitfires have been scrambled at Middle Wallop.



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It's easy to use and at around £120 is probably the best buy for the first time user."

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Crusade in Europe
Commodore 64
Microprose/US Gold
Price: £19.95/cass and disk

Crusade in Europe is the predecessor to *Decision in the Desert*, part of Microprose's Command Series simulation games. It allows the player to replay the 'climactic campaign of WWII — the battle for France and the Low Countries in 1944'.

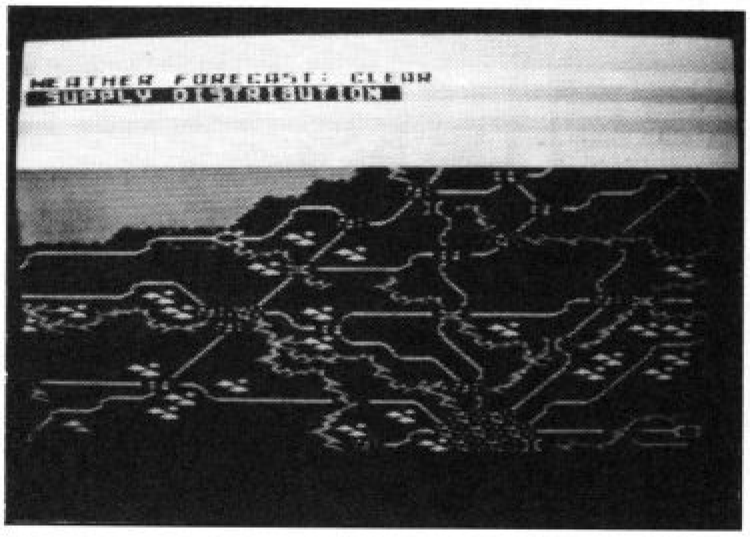
Crusade in Europe suffers from all of the same problems as *Decision in the Desert*: overly complex and confusing to the player. Graphics-wise, *Crusade in Europe* is as bad as *Decision in the Desert* — poorly displayed symbols and again with an unnecessary complexity in their variety.

The complexity is also apparent in Microprose's approach to combating piracy of their games. To begin play after loading the game each time, you are asked for a password. The passwords are printed in the 54-page rules booklet, not all in one place but 'cleverly' scattered throughout the text. When asked, the player has to flip through the booklet to find the correct password for the correct day — time consuming and silly. The rules are sufficiently complex that you can't play without the booklet anyway.

The game offers several different scenarios which vary in complexity from the battle for Normandy through to the entire campaign in Europe. The two-player option does not use well-defined game turns but rather relies on a fair division of time at the keyboard, mutually agreed by the players, who give orders to their units through the standard method of placing a cursor over the unit and then selecting from a list of options.

All the time the players are giving instructions, the units are carrying out their orders, engaging in combat and taking losses. This means that if you are playing against the computer you are continually in action, rather than waiting for the opponent to move. The speed of the 'accelerated real time' can be altered, but even at the Slow setting, there is a lot going on on the screen at any one time.

The graphics are average and



The scrolling map of Europe is the main playboard of The Game. A cursor enables you to pick up and move troops, supplies, and artillery.

the use of flashing icons to give status reports is wasted because they do not give enough information.

Crusade was a difficult subject to tackle — perhaps too difficult. I found myself lapsing into a bored state of play where, rather than waiting in excitement for the next turn at the keyboard, both players found themselves dreading their upcoming turn. Because of this, the game suffers. The one thing it does offer is a wealth of historical accuracy and detail and, if you are willing to put up with average graphics and limited replayability, then this is the game for you.

Jon Sutherland

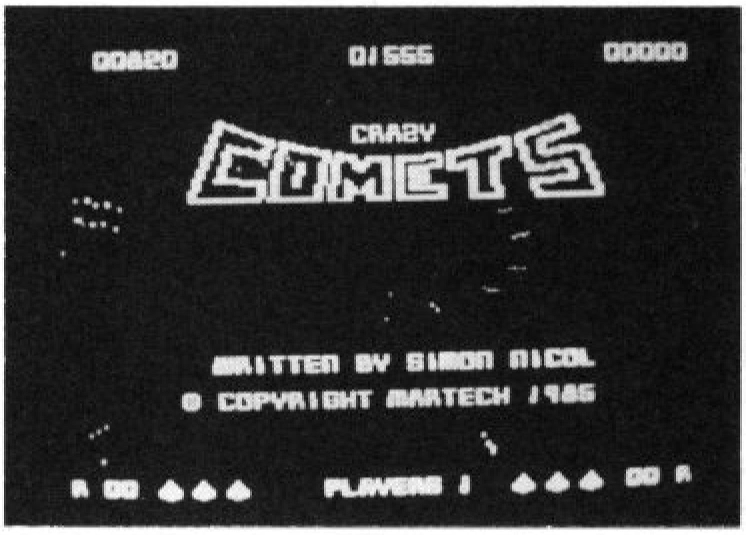
Graphics	★★
Sound	★★
Toughness	★★★★
Staying Power	★★
Value	★

Crazy Comets
Commodore 64
Martech
Price: £7.95/cass

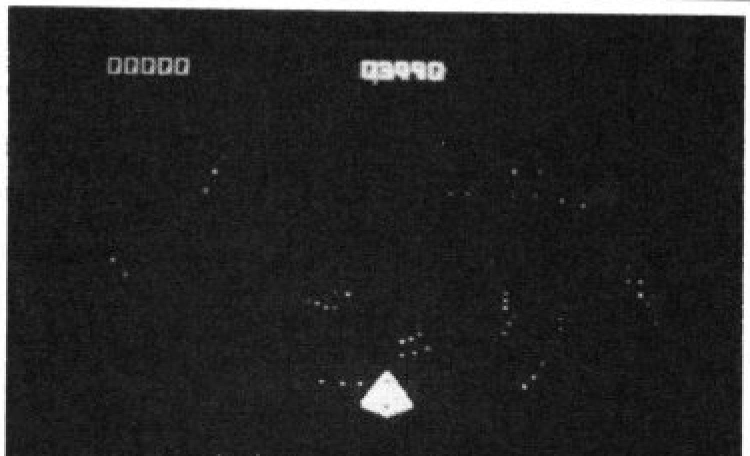
Crazy Comets is a throwback to the 'good old days' . . . back to the time when you could unwrap, say, a Llamasoft tape and relax with a barefaced shoot-up without any thoughts of tackling the likes of *Elite*.

To say that this game from Martech relies on a simple concept is a bit of an understatement; really there's next to nothing in it. It even loads in less time than it takes to flex your trigger finger. But if you accept it for what it is an arcade conversion of, and are not averse to the joystick becoming welded to your right hand, then enjoyment is just a few inches of ferric oxide away.

The endless task in front of you is the annihilation of berserk galactic matter. Heavenly bodies, comets and satellites have to be snuffed out before they wreak havoc throughout the universe. Right at the start of



Crazy Comets — a super fast shoot 'em up that owes more than just a bit to the popular arcade Mad Planets.



each round cosmic dust starts to spiral and swirl around your wedge-shaped destroyer. Multi-colour orbs sweep in, growing in size the longer your photon bolts take to reach their target. Need I say that collisions at this stage are pretty catastropic so you need to bob and weave as you pump in the shots. Stray space capsules can be rescued for bonus points. Perfect rounds? That's when you eliminate everything before they become supernova. I suppose there are limitless rounds each basically identical.

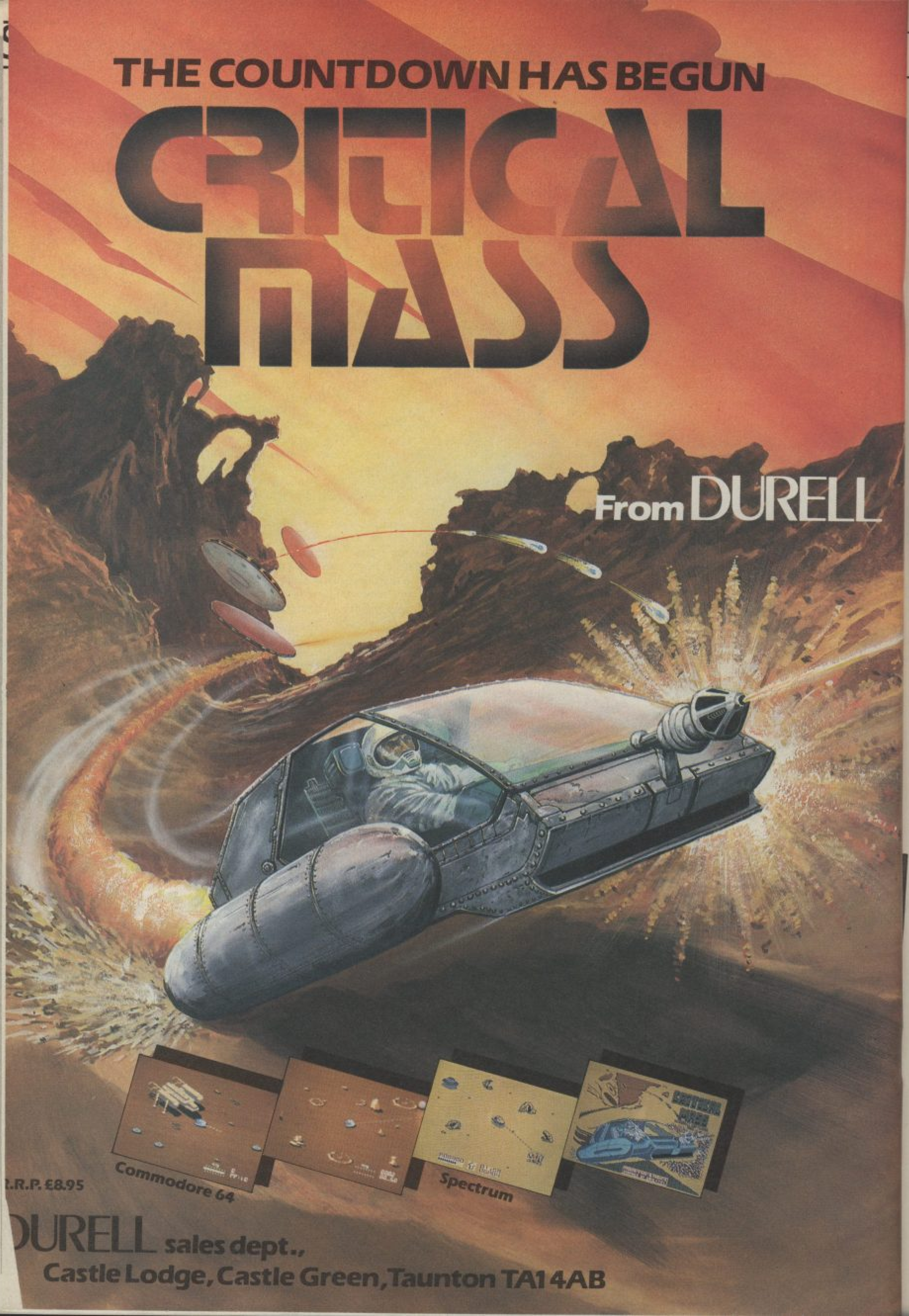
The soundtrack is only a sniff away from being fantastically good; it really matches the action and if Simon Nicol is responsible for the music as well as the game then Martech should corner him right now.

Simon Farrell

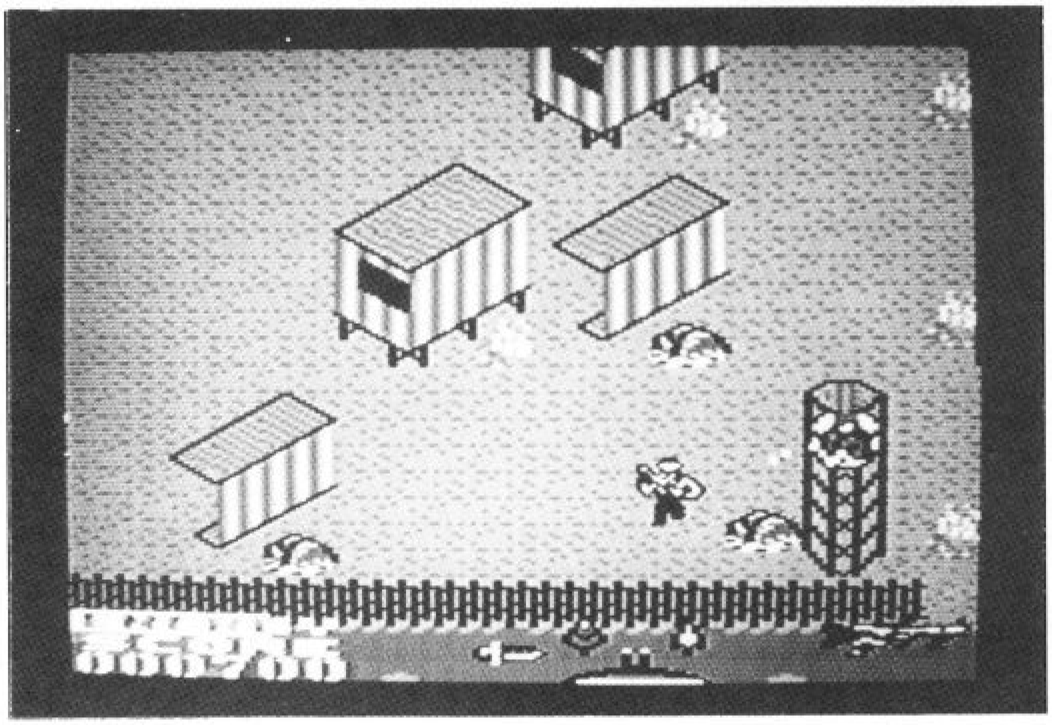
Graphics	★★★★
Sound	★★★
Toughness	★★★
Staying Power	★★★★
Value	★★★



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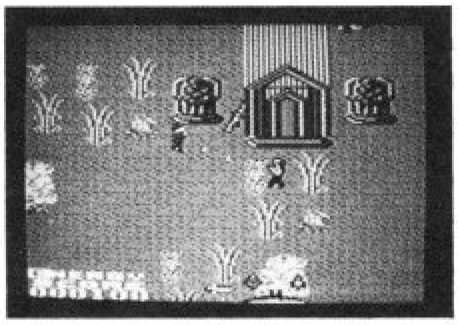

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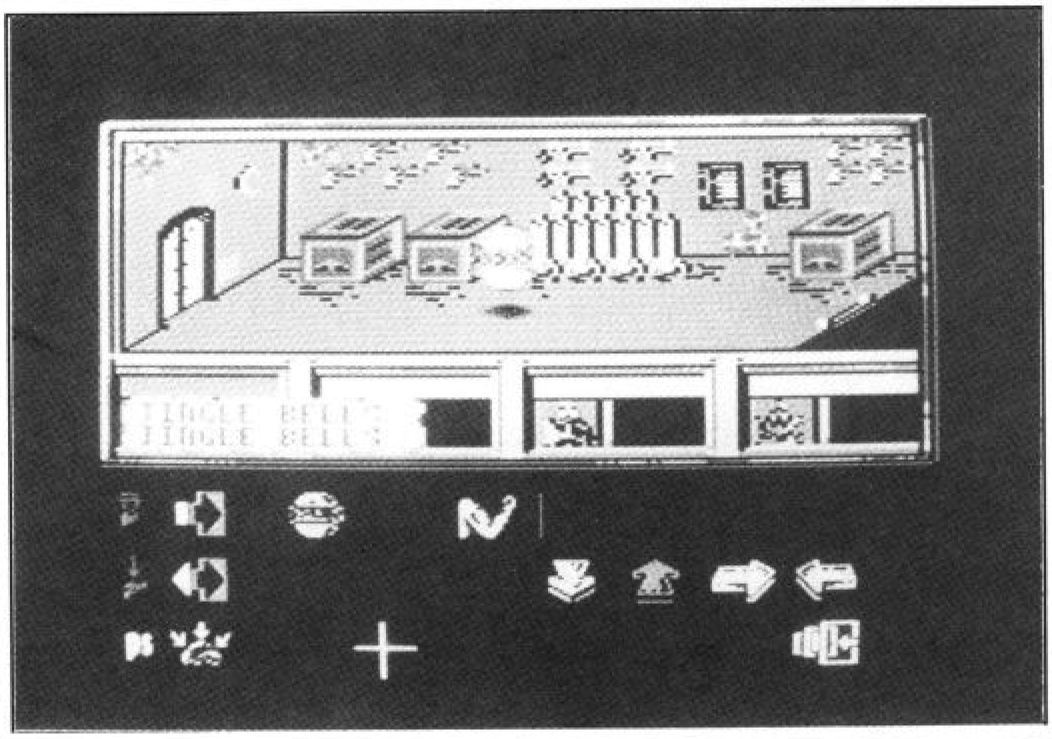
Here as promised is the update on Rambo with the first ever screen shot of the game. The shot you're looking at shows Rambo running amok in the gook prison camp, taking out huts and surveillance towers. The bottom of the screen shows your weapon status, energy and score.

The version we saw was only half complete but it was already shaping up to be hot stuff. Comparisons will have to be made with Elite's *Commando* so watch out for a possible head-to-head clash in January. The playing music is, incidentally, brilliant. Stay tuned.



Rambo at the temple, note the machine-gun standing by the wall. Grab it to deal double death.

ENIGMA FORCE



***Enigma Force* is the sequel to Beyond's enormously successful and innovative icon-driven adventure game — Shadowfire.**

If you ever played *Shadowfire* for any length of time, you may have managed to capture the evil General Zoff. Well I've got news for you. It seems that the evil so and so escaped and is up to no good again in this sequel.

You thought the Enigma Force were just too smart to let Zoff out of their hands but the fact is he escaped and somebody has to do something about it.

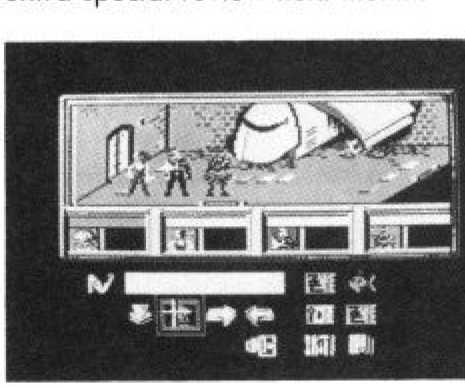
Since the launch of Shadowfire icons have been established as the latest trendy thing in computer games. If your game ain't got icons it just ain't cool. *Enigma Force,* needless to say, has them by the dozens, just as *Shadowfire* did.

The game itself is set on the homeworld of Sylk — a member of the Enigma team. Also on the team are Maul the transporter, the beautiful and devious Sevrina, warriors Sylk and Zark plus your good self.

Zoff has destroyed the Enigmacraft but it still manages to get this message to you "Our location is an underground complex beneath the capital city. Sylk's people, the insectoids, are locked in battle with reptiloid storm troopers loyal to Zoff. Communication scan reveals republican destructor tugs are due off planet at indeterminate time.".

The computer also recommends a course of action. You must turn the insectoids into your allies, find the one good space craft on the planet, and apprehend General Zoff in the name of the Emperor.

Looks like being another certain hit for Beyond. Watch out for a G-Force extra special review next month.





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Commodore 64 Chart

Still slugging away at the top of the chart is *Frank Bruno's Boxing* from Elite. The heavyweight has been at the top of the charts for two months now — beating off the challenge from the other athletes in *Summer Games II*.

Straight in at number three is one of CU's Top Twenty games of 1985 — *Spy Vs Spy — the Island Caper*. Nice to see four CU Screen Stars dominating the 64 top twenty.

Other new entries this month are Activision's *Hacker* — straight in at a very respectable number 12. Also making their first chart showings are *Sabre Wulf* — the Ultimate Spectrum game conversion from Firebird — and *Terrormolinos* — Melbourne's slap-stick adventure about a Spanish holiday that goes disastrously wrong.

Just as interesting as the new games in the chart are the biggies yet to show. Amongst them watch out for *Winter Games, Little Computer People, Rock and Wrestle, Quake Minus 1*, and *Superman*.

Charts compiled for Commodore User by GALLUP. The UK's number one games chart.

1	Frank Bruno's Boxing	Elite
2	Summer Games II	Epyx/US Gold
NEW	Spy Vs Spy II	Beyond
4	Way of the Exploding Fist	Melbourne House
5	Sky Fox	Ariolasoft
6	Barry McGuigan's Boxing	Activision
7	Karateka	Ariolasoft
8	Beach-Head II	Access/US Gold
9	Blackwyche	Ultimate
10	Wizardry	The Edge
11	Now Games	Virgin
NEW	Hacker	Activision
13	Paradroid	Hewson Consultants
NEW	Who Dares Wins II	Alligata
15	Pitstop II	Epyx/US Gold
16	BMX Racers	Mastertronic
17	Action Biker	Mastertronic
18	Elite	Firebird
19	Kick Start	Mastertronic
20	Finders Keepers	Mastertronic

General Chart

1	Way of the Exploding Fist	Melbourne House
2	Frank Bruno's Boxing	Elite
3	Daley Thompson's Test	Ocean
4	Fairlight	The Edge
5	Fighting Warrior	Melbourne House
6	Now Games	Virgin
NEW	Hacker	Activision
8	Formula One Simulator	Mastertronic
9	Finders Keepers	Mastertronic
10	Summer Games II	Epyx/US Gold
NEW	Spy Vs Spy II	Beyond
12	Action Biker	Mastertronic
13	Graham Gooch Test Cricket	Audiogenic
14	Beach-Head	Access/US Gold
15	Bored of the Rings	Silversoft
16	Sky Fox	Ariolasoft
17	BMX Racers	Mastertronic
18	Hypersports	Imagine
NEW	Terrormolinos	Melbourne House
20	Barry McGuigan Boxing	Activision

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Staying alive in '85

Dan Gutman reports

With '86 just round the next block, Dan Gutman reflects on a year that's done no favours for the American computer industry. But amidst the machines that just wouldn't sell and the lurking bailiffs, there's been a few lighthearted moments . . .

Now that we've reached the end of the year, I feel it's my duty to make at least some effort to sum up the events that took place in the US computer world during '85. And what a year it was! If this description seems like a disjointed jumble of confusion, it only reflects what's happening in the industry itself.

In the news, the year started off with an ominous bang when Coleco pulled the plug on their Adam computer system on January 2nd. The computer was deeply flawed from day one, and things just got worse and worse for it. Two months later, IBM announced that they would stop making their PC Junior — the computer that was supposed to "legitimize" the idea of home computers in America. If IBM can drop clangers, nobody's safe.

And the bad news just kept rumbling on; the computer magazine field shrivalled to about a dozen major publications still in business (from over 100), and the book publishers severely cut back on their schedules of computer books. The newspaper press, naturally jumped all over all this gloom and ran a lot of articles claiming the whole computer industry was a fad. We, of course, know differently. Hopefully, the public won't fall for it.

Meanwhile, computers were stealthily making their way into all corners of American life. The *New York Public Library* put their entire card catalogue on disk and installed terminals for people to use and look up any book in the library in seconds. Other libraries around the country followed suit. Computerized public information terminals started popping up in airports and train stations around the country.

Everyday appliances — toasters, microwave ovens, television sets, bathroom scales — began appearing with microprocessors built into them. A lot of people who would never buy a computer for their home now have them in all their appliances. People are getting used to punching keys to make things happen instantly.



Year of the Oddball

There were a lot of oddball computer news stories. In May, a 15-year-old hacker named Peter Leppik helped the Minneapolis police nab a child molester who had been storing his evidence on a computer. After the police worked at it for a week, Leppik cracked the code in a half an hour.

In the summer, a computer claimed that Joseph Triggs of Kennedy High School in Chicago failed to show up for a full year of school, even though his mother insists he was there every day.

In March, an Idaho based neo-Nazi group established a computer network to link up nuts like themselves. And the Internal Revenue Service's computers lost the records of more than $300 million in payroll witholding tax payments.

One day the paper reported that IBM had run out of disk drives for its PC AT computer. That I couldn't understand. Does Ford run out of wheels? Does Campbell run out of soup?

Astronauts on the Space Shuttle Challenger took a computer into space with them (no, it wasn't a Commodore 64) to measure solar radiation, and the Broadway show *Cats* (which I believe was a smash in your country) used a computer to control 15,000 lights and 2,000 cats eyes. 1985 was the year that the first comic book was created on a computer. For trivia fans, the name of the comic was "Shatter".

Lots of famous people got involved with computers for the first time — mostly for money. Here's a list of people who have lent their names to computer products: Isaac Asimov, Bill Bixby, Dom DeLouise, Alan Alda, John Cleese, Roger Moore, Bill Cosby, Leonard Nimoy, Bruce Jenner, Jim Fixx, Ernest Borgnine, Sylvia Porter, Martina Navratilova, Mr. T., and Dave Winfield.

Also, former President Jimmy Carter bought a computer for his wife Rosalyn, and Jack Tramiel bought a computer company for himself. Science fiction authors like Ray Bradbury and Arthur C. Clarke began to turn their books into interactive fiction.

Go with the Trends

There were almost too many trends in computing this year to keep an eye on all of them. The buzzword of the year had to be "*artificial intelligence*", even though there wasn't much AI software in the stores — and most people don't know what it means.

Next year's buzzword is sure to be "*compact disks*". The ranks of the "computer orphans" grew this year, as some slow-selling computers were discontinued. Some people became "computer commuters" — instead of working at an office, they work at home with a terminal. Some "computermats" opened in Illinois. There are places where you can go and rent a computer by the hour.

Computer game software became less popular, while other types of software started selling: animation programs, diet programs, recipes programs, construction set programs, and trivia programs.

Telecommunications is getting very popular over here, as networks like *PeopleLink* and *Playnet* have hundreds of people all around the country attending "electronic cocktail parties" by computer. Some of the best-selling programs in the US were those "fast-load" programs for the Commodore disk drive.

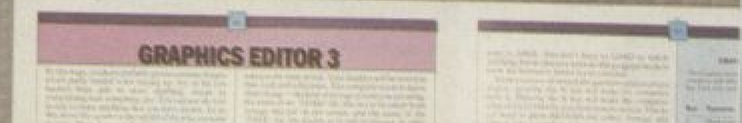
As usual, we're looking toward the future — technology and the wonders it will bring. The first glimmer of many new technologies appeared this year. Computers were used to turn old black and white motion pictures into new colour versions. Optical character readers started to appear — someday they'll revolutionize word processing. We also saw the first signs of optical video disk recorders and computerized roadmaps, which will someday be under every dashboard. The new laser printers show that publishing is undergoing a revolution. Photography is changing too. Kodak introduced a device that produces a hard copy printout of anything on the TV screen. Electronic cameras that use floppy disks instead of film and display the pictures on TV are coming too.

It's all a little dizzying, isn't it? Maybe twenty or thirty years from now, we'll be able to read a book on the history of computer technology and everything that's happening today will make perfect sense — or sound even crazier. Until then, let's all sit back and enjoy the ride. □





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THE NEW GENERATION OF BACKUP METHODS HAS ARRIVED

"**Freeze Frame**" is the product that '64 owners have been waiting for. At the flick of a switch "**Freeze Frame**" will take control of your computer and freeze the program in memory, allowing you to **SAVE it to tape or disc**. The uses are endless, but typical applications are . . .

TAPE TO DISC: ANY program can be frozen and **transferred to disc** regardless of the type of loading technique used. (Disc save incorporates a fast loading system.)

DISC TO TAPE: ANY memory resident disc program can be backed up onto tape. (Choice of normal or turbo save speed.)

DISC TO DISC: It is possible to make a self contained back up of disc based programs that will both **load at high speed** and **allow the rest of the disc to be used as normal**.

TAPE TO TAPE: Tape back ups can be made at turbo speed with just one tape deck.

In fact "**Freeze Frame**" **will FREEZE any program** that is memory resident, and allow you to make a back up of that program onto tape or disc. The beauty being that the saved version can be a fast booting single file. The process is **completely automatic**, no knowledge of BASIC or machine language is required, just follow the prompts and the simple instructions for **100% success**.

"**Freeze Frame**" is a hardware "device" that plugs into the cartridge port of the '64. It does **NOT** dump the entire contents of memory, just the **working program**. Programs converted run **independently** of the hardware.

ONLY £39.95

WARNING: Don't be mislead by other adverts, if you want to transfer turbo load programs to disc, software only utilities are **inadequate**. They suffer from a variety of drawbacks including poor success rate, awkward to use, greedy on disc space and overpricing.

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Doubler has been an **enormous success** and continues to sell very well. Why? Because it is the **best product of its type** on the market. Doubler uses a unique method that copies **all types of software** regardless of speed. It consists of **hardware and software**. The software is the key part as unlike other products of its type Doubler creates a **brand new machine copy**. It is very easy to use and very successful. In fact our tests **have proved** that this "device" can achieve **100% success**.

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Now the ultimate disc copying and utility program for the CBM 64 with 1541 disc drive has been **improved even further**. As well as general improvements plus the addition of some useful utilities two important new programs have been added.

The Evesham Nibbler
This is the first copier of its kind to appear on the U.K. market. It is a **true nibbler** (byte for byte) copier that will copy **ALL DOS errors automatically**. This includes DOS errors 20–29 inc. plus non standard errors like half tracks, extra tracks, non standard sync, renumbered tracks, etc. They are all treated as normal work. No knowledge is required at all, it just "**nibbles away**" and produces a perfect copy. Yet it **only takes eight minutes**. Has copied **all discs tested** (except itself). A **class above** anything else available.

Fast File Copier
An **incredibly handy** selective file copier that LOADs and SAVEs at **five times** normal speed. Sounds useful? You won't believe how much until you have used it.

As well as these programs "Disc Disector" incorporates a whole host of useful utilities including the following: **Fast Format**, **Selective Menu Maker**, **Disc Editor** (new sophisticated machine code version), **Scratch/Unscratch**, **Fastcopy**, **Rename**, **Fastload** (four times faster), etc. etc. This program is an **essential purchase** for the 1541 user.

ONLY £29.95

Customers with earlier versions may return them along with £9.95 for "V3.0".

ALIGNMENT PROBLEMS?

1541 PHYSICAL EXAM **£39.95**

IS YOUR 1541 HEALTHY? OR WOULD ITS PHYSICAL EXAM LOOK LIKE THIS ONE?



The program includes a digital alignment disc and software which allows you to **accurately check and correct** disc drive alignment. The instruction booklet is **very detailed**. Also includes quiet drive stops to **stop** that "hammering" thus preventing further problems.

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Get a **QUICKDISC+** cartridge plugged into your '64 and your 1541 will really **start to perform**. So many features per pound (sterling) that you will hardly believe it. Includes the following . . .

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Fast Format takes just 10 seconds.
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Fast File Copier for selective fast copying.
Improved DOS commands (DOS 5.1) makes for easy use of the disc drive. e.g. $(RETURN) will LOAD and display a directory without overwriting BASIC. SHIFT RUN/STOP will LOAD"0:*",8,1 etc. etc. Very, very useful.
Incorporates Centronics printer software (user port) **with CBM graphics** capability. See "Commodore Connexion" for suitable lead.
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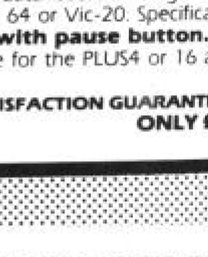
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Tape copier for normal speed loading software. Easy to use and very rarely beaten. **ONLY £5.95**

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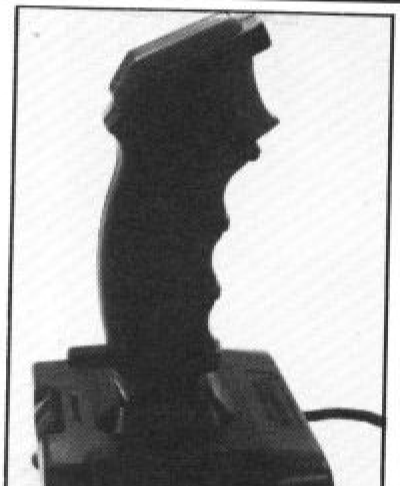
Reviews are clearly priced so you can go for the model to suit your pocket straightaway. Remember, trial and error is the best way of choosing a joystick so try them about before parting with your readies.

The G-Force demand the best joysticks when they're reviewing. So they got Valerie Buckle to road test a whole load of models. We're publishing her 'confidential' report because, like the G-Force, you deserve the best . . .

Quick Shot II

Spectravideo

£9.95



For many, this is the ultimate in joysticks, it's certainly the best selling. Coloured red and black its square base is easy to hold and the four suckers give a strong grip for use on a tabletop. The grip on the shaft really does feel comfortable in the hand and the whole joystick seems robust enough to last. The two fire-buttons — one for the thumb on top and another as a trigger — are easy to access and respond well to pressure.

Quickshot gives good control over all movements and is accurate enough to ensure high scores. There's also an optional auto-fire switch on the base which works very well.

The very fine control required by graphics packages could prove too much for this stick so if this is what you'll use it for, check it out carefully.

VERDICT: One of the best for games, but probably not for budding designers.

Formula II

Kempston

£11.95



Another one to get full marks for imagination, this time for the bright blue colour with white fire buttons and direction indicators. The Formula II has a longer base than most but this gives greater accessibility of the two fire-buttons to the front of the base. The grip on the shaft tends to irritate the finger tips and there is a third fire-button located on the top. Four suckers on the base worked well, but this is one stick which is probably more comfortable to use in the hand.

The shaft of the Formula II has to travel a long way and this makes for tired hands although once you get used to this action it does not detract from the stick's manoeuvrability. I found this one accurate in use and very responsive despite the large vertical path. Fire-buttons reacted well and, in general, it performed well on the games test. The base of the shaft does not feel too tough so I would doubt its ability to stand up to prolonged battering when you're going for the 100 metres record.

On the drawing test, the long vertical path detracted from the accuracy of this joystick. Any movement tended to drift a little further than was wanted but the diagonals were stable and accuracy was satisfactory using the magnify mode.

VERDICT: Definitely worth considering for games use but not for any program which requires single pixel accuracy.

Mach 1

Cheetah

£8.95

Sounds as if someone had his/her tongue firmly lodged in their cheek when naming this joystick but it certainly proved to be no joke when



put on trial. Tough construction makes this stick particularly suited to shoot'em ups at their meanest. The square base is that much more comfortable to hold than most, due to the raised sections on either side which give firm grip to the hand.

Alternatively, the four base suckers will bear the strongest force I could muscle up. The shaft feels solid and the grip fits the fingers well, making this joystick one of the best in terms of comfort.

Three red fire-buttons are provided on the base, trigger and top. I liked the size of the top button which allows even the shortest of thumbs good control. Auto-fire on the front of the base is convenient to access so, in all, this one gets the thumbs up for design.

The travel of the shaft is relatively short and the Mach 1 proved very responsive to fine movements and accurate to boot. I had no problems shooting accurately or dodging lasers and was impressed with the control of diagonals. This stick will probably stand up well to abuse and can't really be faulted for games.

The same positive results were gained with drawing software. The Mach 1 was accurate enough to draw well. Again, the response of the shaft was good and it didn't drift off course. My only reservations with the drawing program is that this type of joystick is perhaps too toughly constructed to suit those creative moments. It becomes a bit tiresome to wield such a cumbersome object for fine work.

VERDICT: A great joystick which will give you many hours of fun at a good price.

Arcade Turbo

Euromax

£14.55

This is basically a souped-up version of the *Arcade* and is similar in many respects. Design of the base is almost identical with tapered front and three rubber pads on the underside. The shaft features



a second fire-button and a switch on the base allows you to choose between either the base or the top fire-button. However, both buttons feel rather loose and the one on the top tends to be in the way when you don't want it and difficult to find when you do.

For games use, I found the Turbo too uncomfortable to be a serious contender although it's fairly fast, reasonably responsive and sufficiently accurate.

For drawing, the turbo just proved too inaccurate although this improved using the zoom or magnify mode. The diagonals tended to wander somewhat and, all in all, I found it unsuitable for detailed graphics.

VERDICT: Not really good enough to warrant the price but performance is adequate if you don't mind discomfort.

Gun Shot II

Vulcan

£9.95

Another firm favourite with games players, this joystick is very similar to the best models around. Again, colours are black and red with raised sections on the base together with effective suckers. The shaft feels strong and durable but lacks the finger grips of the others. This is not really a problem as it does give you the opportunity tomove your hand when things get too sweaty.

The two fire-buttons on the base and top are very responsive but the round button on the top can be difficult to access in times of need. Once again, auto-fire is offered for shoot 'em ups via a switch on the base. This joystick stood up well to a severe pounding at Matrix and responded accurately and with speed. Diagonals were easy to get and accurate firing meant consistently high scores.



However, on the graphic art programs, the Gun Shot II proved bulky and, although diagonals were not difficult, I was not convinced. Even using magnify, single pixel accuracy was almost impossible to achieve. One plus factor is the stick's smooth movement but even so, drawing was difficult to control.

VERDICT: Great for games, not so hot for those with an artistic bent. Gun Shot I is also available without auto-fire, for just £7.95.

RAT

Cheetah

£29.95

The Remote Action Transmitter, commonly known as the RAT works along the same lines as the remote gizmo on your telly. The receiver, housed in a brown case plugs into the joystick port and receives signals from the touch controllable grey/blue transmitter. Direction contact area is within a circle towards the rear of the transmitter and the most sensitive area is just inside of the pips which are really just directional guides. The fire contact area is situated towards the front and a light pressure will activate firing. A removable cover on the underside reveals a connector for the battery (not supplied).

The RAT is very difficult to use at first. My fingers slipped all over the circle before I eventually got used to the unconventional mode of operation.

Thus, my players roamed the screens and lasers fired indiscriminately. With use, it did prove quite accurate and it certainly is very responsive to directional movement and to firing. Even after a fair amount of practice I would not recommend this for fast gamesters. By the way, it works from across the room, and signals can even be bounced off walls.

Drawing software gave interesting results though



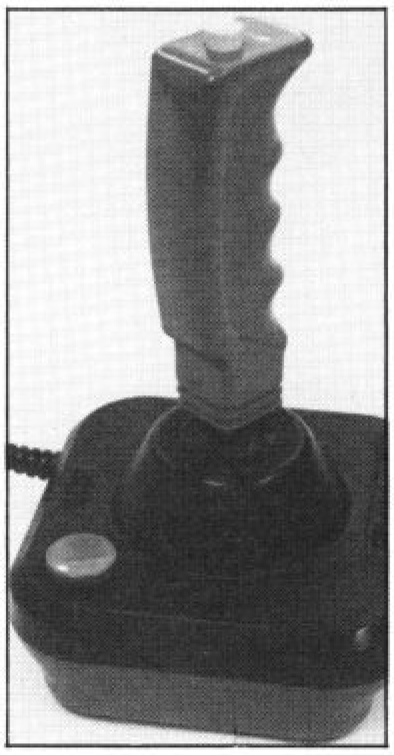
not exactly what I was aiming for as I found the RAT too difficult to control to get fine details. Directional stability was good, again response was adequate but single pixels unattainable.

VERDICT: Very good once you get used to it and I liked the lack of obstructive leads. Rather pricey, though.

Super Threeway

Wico

£32.99



This has got to be one of the sturdiest sticks around — and probably the most expensive. It's called 'three-way' because you get three detachable handles. There's a slim smooth one, a Quick-shot-type grip and a straight grip with a round knob on the top. Choose your handle carefully to suit the game you're playing.

It conforms to the red 'n black tradition and has two fire-buttons; one on top, one on the side. There's no auto-fire option but there is a switch to activate either the top or both buttons.

Movement is sturdy but a little stodgy for really nippy control. The rather tall handle gives a lot of travel, so you've really got to emphasise movements to get results. Both fire-buttons are light and responsive. But this stick comes into its own with joystick-rattling sports simulations. Crank it as hard as you like, it really feels unbreakable.

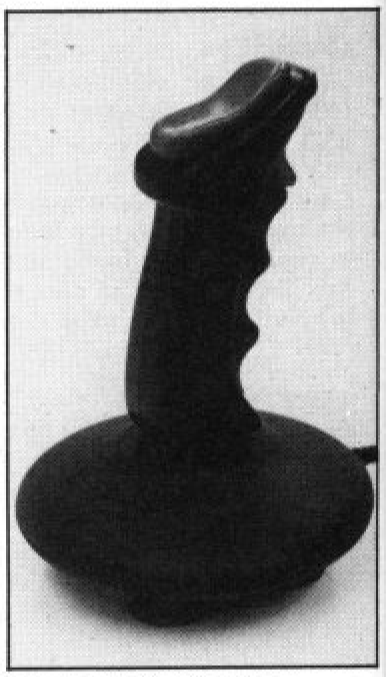
Good and positive results were achieved with drawing packages but since you're paying for strength, it seems rather wasted on delicate movement.

VERDICT: Very pricey but an absolute must if you're a joystick wrecker.

Challenger

Euromax

£6.95



Looks very much like the QuickShot II with its black and red design and similar hand grip. The base of the stick is round and so is marginally easier to grasp and again, there are four base suckers. The two fire-buttons on the top and front are simple to use but did not respond quite so well and made a very loud 'clicking' noise which can be offputting.

The auto-fire option located on the top of the base makes up for this to a certain extent but, as we all know, auto-fire is not always very useful when shots have to be timed carefully.

The travel of the shaft is fairly short but its base felt quite loose and the response to movement I found to be poor. Diagonals were almost impossible to get in the heat of the moment and my general impression was that the Challenger would not stand up to sports simulation type pounding for long.

On drawing packages, this stick fared badly, being too inaccurate to do much even using a zoom mode. Response was not up to much, resulting in drifting lines although, when I could get them, the diagonals were fairly stable.

VERDICT: A bit too pricey for mediocre results.

The Stick

Lightwave

£12.95



This is a baseless joystick for single hand use which works by means of tilt switches. Glass tubes inside the shaft contain a small amount of mercury and when the stick is tilted, the eight-point switch is activated. The black shaft has a finger grip and two red fire-buttons, one on the top and another for the index finger. A small sucker can be attached to the base of the shaft if you prefer more conventional control.

In tests, this one proved quite difficult to get used to as it is easy to tilt the stick too far and consequently play goes out of your control. When playing games which require fast movements this did not give adequate control and accuracy.

Similarly, the 'Stick' wandered around with drawing software although directional stability was good. Single pixel accuracy was well nigh impossible. One program I did find this ideal for was Psychedelia, as it proved very conducive to the Minter approach to entertainment.

VERDICT: A very specialist joystick not recommended for run-of-the-mill games.

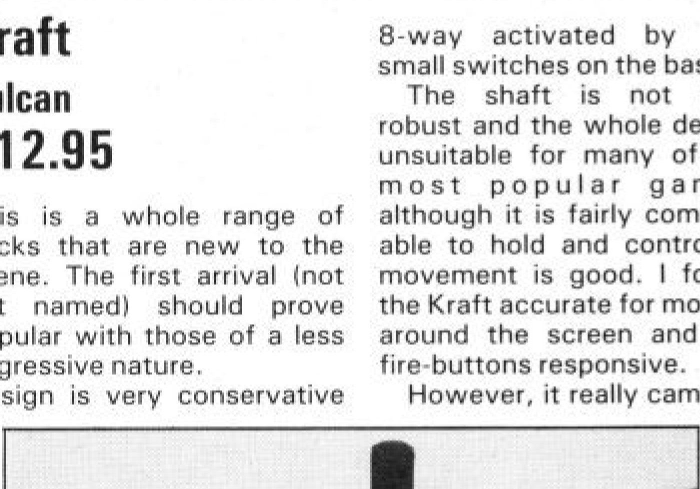
Kraft

Vulcan

£12.95

This is a whole range of sticks that are new to the scene. The first arrival (not yet named) should prove popular with those of a less aggressive nature.

Design is very conservative with a square base, two small fire-buttons towards the front and a small shaft (approx. 2 in.) protruding upwards from the middle. Control can either be 4-way or 8-way activated by two small switches on the base.



The shaft is not very robust and the whole design unsuitable for many of the most popular games although it is fairly comfortable to hold and control of movement is good. I found the Kraft accurate for moving around the screen and the fire-buttons responsive.

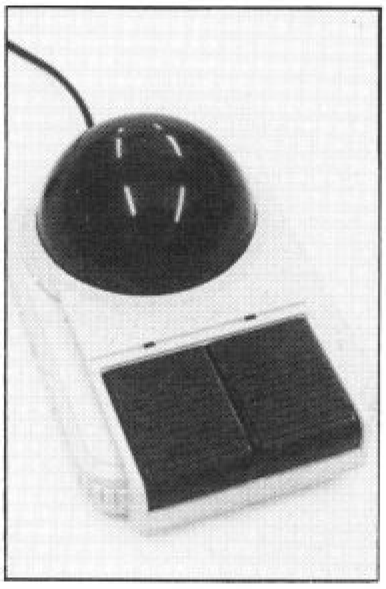
However, it really came into its own with drawing software as it proved accurate enough for even single pixel movement. Diagonals again were easy to draw and stable and I couldn't fault it.

VERDICT: Not worth considering if you just want to play fast games but ideal for graphics or for CAD.

Quickshot IX

Spectravideo

£13.95

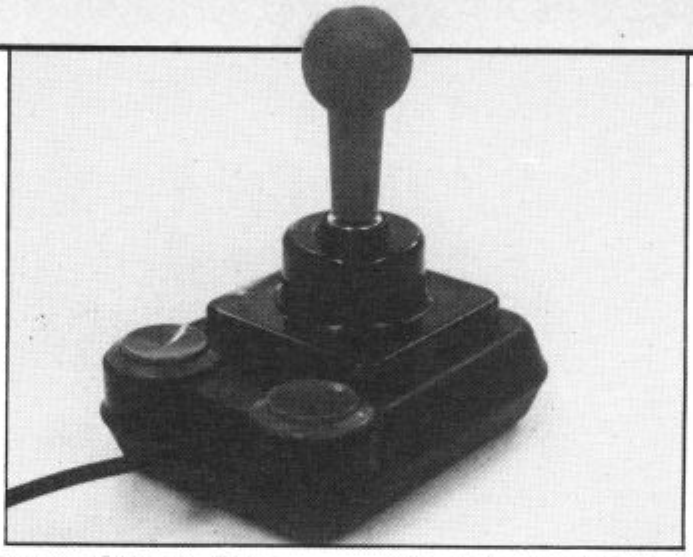


This controller looks very much like a track ball but works on the same principle as a joystick. The large rectangular cream base houses two enormous brown fire buttons with LEDs which flash on when the buttons are depressed. Auto-fire is selected via a switch on the side. At the other, curved, end of the base a large spherical brown ball controls movement by pivoting in the direction indicated by light pressure. Left or right hand modes are available via another switch on the side of the base. Once again, four suckers allow table top use.

In action, I was impressed with this one, despite its ugly looks. It is very comfortable to operate, no blistered thumbs here. Response to pressure in any of the eight directions is quite fast and accuracy seemed fair. The fire-buttons give rapid fire but, all in all, I found the novelty of control rather difficult to get used to.

Using drawing software, I found directional very good but pixel accuracy poor unless using the magnify mode. Response was satisfactory but the overall size is too chunky for fine drawing with a graphic art package.

VERDICT: Full marks for an innovative design, with fairish results on tests but others will serve you better.



Competition Pro

Euromax

£10.75

The Competition Pro is almost identical in style to the Formula 1 except that its colours are (yawn) black and red. Same large, square base, two fire-buttons and rubber pads give the same pros and cons. The 'click' on this one is slightly less audible but still gives adequate indication of movement. The travel on the shaft is a little longer and less smooth but really, the differences are minimal.

The same results were to be had, response to movement was good, accuracy high, and fire-button control gave satisfying scores. The eight directions presented no problems for this joystick even in the thick of battle.

Similarly, this stick gave consistently high quality with drawing software. Control of the joystick was good giving accurate drawing, response was pretty instantaneous and all directions stable.

VERDICT: Not much to choose between this and Formula I, both being of a similar high standard.

Formula 1

Kempston

£16.95



Based on the popular Pro 5000 joystick, this is my personal favourite as it will perform well in most situations. Bright blue with two big white fire buttons to the front of the base, this stick is really designed to be handheld even though its square base makes it a little too hefty for comfort. Four rubber pads on the base do give some slip-resistance but it is not adequate for most current games.

Shaft response is almost immediate and requires only a slight touch. One of the nices features is the soothing 'click' as the switches connect but this does not detract from the smoothness of the controls.

This joystick was extremely accurate on test and all eight directions very easy to achieve. Chunky fire-buttons for left or right-hand use were responsive and my only reservation is that it becomes uncomfortable in the hand after continued use.

Equally good for graphics, with a fine degree of response to movement and accurate for detailed work. All eight directions worked well and were stable.

VERDICT: If you can only afford one joystick for a variety of uses, then this or the Competition Pro will probably be best for you.

Arcade

Euromax

£9.75

This joystick is quite nicely styled to give a high degree of comfort. The base is square at the rear but tapers towards the front so it sits comfortably in the hand. The whole thing is black with one red fire-button at the front of the base.

Three rubber feet work reasonably well on a tabletop, the shaft feels tough and durable, length of travel is short and movements require a mere touch with corresponding 'clicks'.

I found the Arcade comfortable and easy to use although response to shaft movements was a little sluggish and the fire-button loose. Reasonable accuracy was achieved but not good enough for the real enthusiast.

The Arcade performed similarly with the drawing programs. The eight directions were all stable and easy to achieve, response good and accuracy fair.



VERDICT: Not bad, but doesn't excel in any one area so there are better to be had for the same price.

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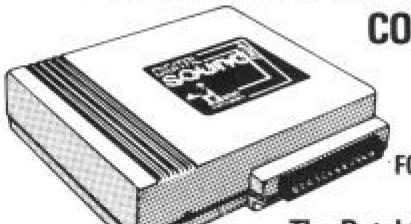
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Silent Night

for the Commodore 64 by Tom Jeffries

Christmas just wouldn't be the same without the family carol singing. Picture it: grandad at the piano, the children's joyful faces as they sing merrily along.

Well you can forget all that boring traditional stuff. Computer-carols are all the rage — and why shouldn't the Commodore 64 get into the act?

So here it is, your very own type in and run carol. Astound your family on Christmas Day, put them off their turkey with Tom Jeffries' wacky 'interpretation' of this trad favourite.

It's simple, just type the listing on page 84 straight in. Be careful, though, there's lots of data. When you've fastened type 'RUN 1000' to check you haven't made a mistake.

HOW TO USE EASY ENTER

COLOUR CODES

[BLK]	— press CTRL and 1
[WHT]	— press CTRL and 2
[RED]	— press CTRL and 3
[CYN]	— press CTRL and 4
[PUR]	— press CTRL and 5
[GRN]	— press CTRL and 6
[BLU]	— press CTRL and 7
[YEL]	— press CTRL and 8

[ORG]	— press CBM key and 1
[BRN]	— press CBM key and 2
[L RED]	— press CBM key and 3
[GR1]	— press CBM key and 4
[GR2]	— press CBM key and 5
[L GRN]	— press CBM key and 6
[L BLU]	— press CBM key and 7
[GR3]	— press CBM key and 8

COMMODORE GRAPHIC CHARACTERS

PRINT WHITE
CURSOR DOWN
REVERSE FIELD ON
HOME
PRINT RED
CURSOR RIGHT
PRINT GREEN
PRINT BLUE
FUNCTION KEY F1
FUNCTION KEY F3
FUNCTION KEY F5
FUNCTION KEY F7

FUNCTION KEY F2
FUNCTION KEY F4
FUNCTION KEY F6
FUNCTION KEY F8
PRINT BLACK
CURSOR UP
REVERSE FIELD OFF
CLEAR
INSERT
PRINT PURPLE
CURSOR LEFT
PRINT YELLOW
PRINT CYAN

OTHER CODES

[CU]	— press 'cursor up' key
[CD]	— press 'cursor down' key
[CL]	— press 'cursor left' key
[CR]	— press 'cursor right' key
[HOM]	— press HOME key
[CLS]	— press CLEAR key
[DEF]	— press INST key (insert)
[REV]	— press RVS ON key (CTRL and 9)
[OFF]	— press RVS OFF key (CTRL and 0)
[SPC]	— press spacebar
[G<key]	— press CBM key with specified key
[G>key]	— press SHIFT key with specified key

EXAMPLES:

[3SPC]	— press spacebar three times
[5CD]	— press 'cursor down' key five times
[G>F]	— press SHIFT key with 'F'

```
10 GOTO160
20 REM:********************************
30 REM:         SILENT NIGHT
40 REM:
50 REM:     ARRANGED BY TOM JEFFRIES
60 REM:  COPYRIGHT 1985 BY TOM JEFFRIES
70 REM:
80 REM:********************************
90 IFZ<2THENWF=16+Z:RETURN
100 IFZ<4THENWF=30+Z:RETURN
110 WF=60+Z:RETURN
120 FORT=1TO35:NEXT:RETURN
130 FORT=1TO78:NEXT:RETURN
140 FORT=1TO230:NEXT:RETURN
150 DATA0,0,90,0,0,68,244,0,0,0,6,0,35,166,0,0,120,0,0,35,150,0,0,0,15
160 S=54272:FORA=STOS+24:READD:POKEA,D:NEXT:FORL=1TO147
170 READA,B,C,D,E,F,G,H:Z=GAND15:GOSUB90:W2=WF:Z=INT(G/16):GOSUB90:W1=WF
180 Z=HAND15:GOSUB90:W3=WF:POKES,A:POKES+1,B:POKES+7,C:POKES+8,D:POKES+14,E
190 POKES+15,F:POKES+4,W1:POKES+11,W2:POKES+18,W3:ONH/16GOSUB120,130,140:NEXT
200 END
210 DATA0,0,0,0,48,4,0,35,0,0,239,19,195,16,5,19,0,0,31,21,195,16,5,35,0,0
220 DATA31,21,97,8,4,19,0,0,239,19,195,16,5,35,0,0,31,21,195,16
230 DATA5,19,0,0,31,21,35,3,4,51,0,0
240 DATA0,0,187,3,0,19,0,0,0,0,187,0,3,34,0,0,0,0,244,3,0,19,0,0,0,0,244,3,0,34
250 DATA0,0,0,0,48,4,0,35,0,0,239,19,195,16,5,19,0,0,31,21,195,16,5,35,0,0
260 DATA31,21,97,8,4,19,0,0,239,19,195,16,5,35,0,0,31,21,195,16
270 DATA5,19,0,0,31,21,19,3,4,51,0,0
280 DATA0,0,187,3,0,19,0,0,0,0,187,0,3,34,0,0,0,0,244,3,0,19,0,0,0,0,244,3,0,34
290 REM:BAR5
300 DATA30,25,0,0,48,4,80,35,30,25,239,19,195,16,85,19,30,25,31,21,195,16,85,35
310 DATA49,28,31,21,97,8,84,19,30,25,239,19,195,16,85,35,30,25,31,21,195,16
320 DATA85,19,31,21,31,21,35,3,84,51,31,21,0,0,187,3,84,19
330 DATA31,21,0,0,187,3,84,34,31,21,0,0,244,3,84,19,31,21,0,0,244,3,68,34
340 REM:BAR7
350 DATA30,25,0,0,48,4,80,35,30,25,239,19,195,16,85,19,30,25,31,21,195,16,85,35
360 DATA49,28,31,21,97,8,84,19,30,25,239,19,195,16,85,35,30,25,31,21,195,16
370 DATA85,19,31,21,31,21,35,3,84,51,31,21,0,0,48,4,84,19
380 DATA31,21,0,0,48,4,84,34,31,21,0,0,71,5,84,19,31,21,0,0,71,5,68,34
390 REM:BAR9
400 DATA162,37,0,0,71,6,80,35,162,37,223,29,30,25,85,19,162,37,165,31
410 DATA30,25,85,35,162,37,165,31,143,12,68,19,162,37,223,29,30,25,85,35
420 DATA162,37,165,31,30,25,85,19,165,31,165,31,71,6,84,51,165,31,0,0,152,5,84,1
9
430 DATA165,31,0,0,152,5,84,34,165,31,0,0,180,4,84,19,165,31,0,0,180,4,68,34
440 REM:BAR11
450 DATA135,33,0,0,48,4,80,35,135,33,239,19,195,16,85,19,135,33,31,21,195,16
460 DATA85,35,135,33,31,21,97,8,68,19,135,33,239,19,195,16,85,35,135,33,31,21
470 DATA195,16,85,19,30,25,31,21,35,3,84,19,30,25,31,21,35,3,84,34,30,25
480 DATA143,10,97,8,85,51,30,25,143,12,143,10,85,51
490 REM:BAR13
```

```
470 DATA195,16,85,19,30,25,31,21,35,3,84,19,30,25,31,21,35,3,84,34,30,25
480 DATA143,10,97,8,85,51,30,25,143,12,143,10,85,51

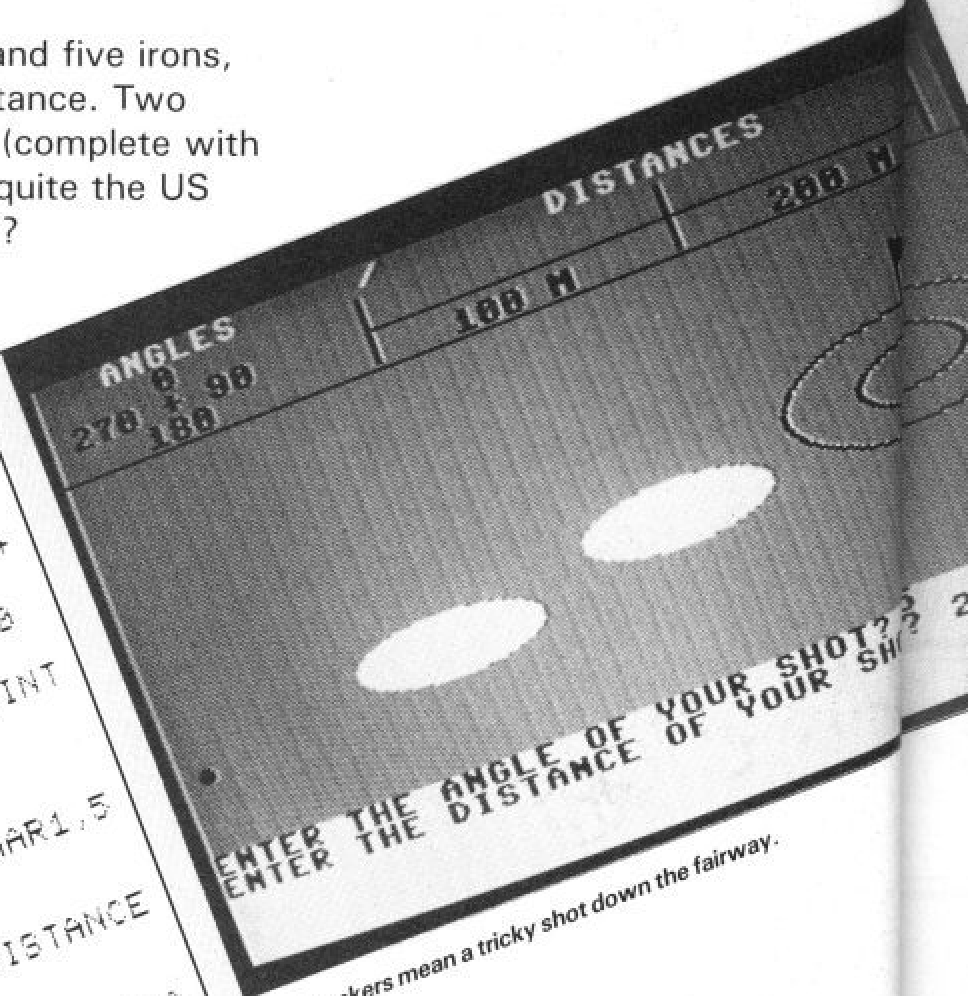
490 REM:BAR13
500 DATA49,28,195,16,48,11,51,35,49,28,195,16,48,11,85,21
510 DATA49,28,195,16,48,11,68,36,49,28,195,16,48,11,51,19,49,28,195,16,48,11
520 DATA85,21,49,28,195,16,48,11,68,32,135,33,96,22
530 DATA24,14,85,51,165,31,96,22,210,15,85,51,49,28,96,22,195,16,85,51
540 REM:BAR15
550 DATA30,25,0,0,48,4,80,35,30,25,239,19,195,16,85,19,30,25,31,21,195,16,85,35
560 DATA49,28,31,21,97,8,84,19,30,25,239,19,195,16,85,35,30,25,31,21,195,16
570 DATA85,19,31,21,31,21,35,3,84,19,31,21,0,0,35,3,84,34,31,21
580 DATA143,10,97,8,81,49,31,21,143,12,143,10,81,49
590 REM:BAR17
600 DATA49,28,195,16,48,11,17,33,49,28,195,16,48,11,85,21
610 DATA49,28,195,16,48,11,68,36,49,28,195,16,48,11,17,17,49,28,195,16,48,11
620 DATA85,21,49,28,195,16,48,11,68,32,135,33,96,22
630 DATA24,14,17,49,165,31,96,22,210,15,17,49,49,28,96,22,195,16,17,49
640 REM:BAR19
650 DATA30,25,0,0,48,4,16,33,30,25,239,19,195,16,17,17,30,25,31,21,195,16,17,33
660 DATA49,28,31,21,97,8,16,17,30,25,239,19,195,16,17,33,30,25,31,21,195,16
670 DATA17,17,31,21,31,21,35,3,16,17,31,21,0,0,0,0,16,32,31,21,0,0,35,3,16,19
680 DATA31,21,0,0,48,4,16,19,31,21,0,0,143,10,16,19,31,21,0,0,143,12,16,19
690 DATA31,21,0,0,195,16,16,19,31,21,0,0,31,21,0,19
700 REM:BAR21
710 DATA162,37,0,0,143,12,80,35,162,37,96,22,210,15,85,19,162,37,96,22,143,12,68
720 DATA34,162,37,96,22,143,12,68,19,162,37,96,22,210,15,85,19,162,37,96,22
730 DATA210,15,80,34,193,44,30,25,209,18,85,51,162,37,96,22,210,15,85,51
740 DATA165,31,209,18,143,12,85,51
750 REM:BAR23
760 DATA135,33,0,0,48,4,80,35,135,33,239,19,195,16,85,19,135,33,31,21,195,16,85
770 DATA35,135,33,31,21,97,8,84,19,135,33,239,19,195,16,85,35,135,33,31,21,195
780 DATA16,85,19,62,42,0,0,48,4,80,35,62,42,239,19,195,16,85,19,62,42
790 DATA31,21,195,16,85,35,62,42,31,21,97,8,84,19,62,42,239,19,195,16,85,35
800 DATA62,42,31,21,195,16,85,19,135,33,30,25,31,21,85,51,30,25,31,21,195,16
810 DATA85,51,31,21,195,16,143,12,85,51,30,25,143,12,71,6,85,35,181,23
820 DATA143,12,71,6,85,19,96,22,143,12,71,6,85,35,239,19,143,12,71,6,85,19
830 DATA31,21,143,12,71,6,85,51,195,16,143,12,71,6,84,34,195,16,239,19,195,16
840 DATA85,16,195,16,31,21,195,16,85,35,195,16,31,21,48,4,84,19,195,16,239,19
850 DATA195,16,85,35,195,16,31,21,195,16,85,19,135,33,31,21,97,8,85,51
860 DATA135,33,31,21,97,8,85,51,135,33,31,21,97,8,85,51,135,33,31,21,97,8,85,51
870 DATA135,33,31,21,97,8,68,16,256
880 REM:************************************************************
890 REM:TYPE "RUN1000" TO SEE IF YOU HAVE ENTERED THE NUMBERS CORRECTLY.
900 REM:************************************************************
1000 TTAL=0
1010 READD:IFD>255GOTO1030
1020 TTAL=TTAL+D:GOTO1010
1030 IFTTAL<>63802THENPRINT"CHECKSUM INCORRECT- CHECK ALL DATA LINES":END
1040 PRINT"CHECKSUM CORRECT- NOW TYPE "CHR$(34)"RUN"CHR$(34)" AND"
1050 PRINT"PRESS RETURN":RESTORE:END
```

Golf — for the Commodore 16 and Plus/4

Time to bring out the tartan trousers and 'Slazzy' jumper. From the Australian outback comes Michael Fitzmaurice's challenging Golf game.

No need to bother with woods, putters and five irons, just estimate the angle of shot and the distance. Two screens show you both the whole fairway (complete with bunkers) and a close-up of the green. Not quite the US Masters — but what d'you expect for 16K?

```
1 REM GOLF:BY:MICHAEL FITZMAURICE:FOR CO
MMODORE 16.
2 COLOR0,6,6:GRAPHIC2,1:COLOR1,6,3:COLOR
4,1:VOL8:TRAP67:P=0:U=2:R=0
3 Q=INT(RND(1)*50)+10:W=INT(RND(1)*105)+
50
4 DRAW 1,110,20TO310,20:CHAR1,17,3,"100
M":CHAR1,30,3,"200 M"
5 DRAW1,0,32TO320,32:CIRCLE1,Q,W,U:PAINT
1,Q,W
6 PAINT1,Q,W
7 CHAR1,5,1,"0":CHAR1,1,2,"270"
8 CHAR1,7,2,"90":CHAR1,4,3,"180":CHAR1,5
,2,"+"
9 COLOR1,8,7
10 CHAR,3,0,"ANGLES                DISTANCE
S"
11 COLOR1,6,3
12 DRAW 1,110,10TO110,30:DRAW 1,210,10TO
210,30:DRAW1,310,10TO310,30
13 IFP<>0THEN63
14 S=INT(RND(1)*70)+60
15 CIRCLE1,270,S,4,2
16 COLOR1,6,0
17 CIRCLE1,270,S,50,20
18 CIRCLE1,270,S,25,10
19 DRAW1,270,STO270,S-40
20 DRAW,270,S-40TO285,S-36:DRAWTO270,S-3
21 COLOR1,3,3:PAINT1,275,S-35
22 COLOR0,6,6
23 COLOR1,[illegible],7
24 G=180:L=180
25 F=INT(RND(1)*100)+50
26 H=INT(RND(1)*100)+50
27 CIRCLE1,G,F,30,10
28 CIRCLE1,L,H,30,10
29 PAINT1,G,F:PAINT1,L,H
30 COLOR1,6,3
```



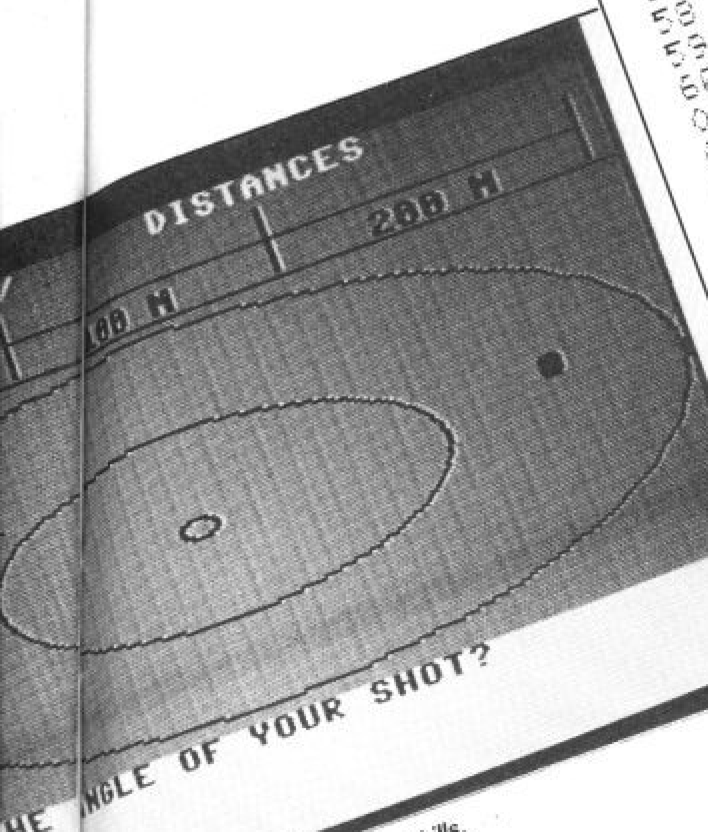
Two bunkers mean a tricky shot down the fairway.



Once you're on th een, it




```
31 IFP<>0THENCIRCLE1,160,95,6,3
32 COLOR0,8,7:X=0:Y=0
33 INPUT"ENTER THE ANGLE OF YOUR SHOT";X
34 INPUT"ENTER THE DISTANCE OF YOUR SHOT
";Y
35 COLOR0,6,6:R=R+1
36 SOUND1,200,20
37 DRAW1,Q,W
38 PAINT0,Q,W
39 LOCATEY,X
40 Q=RDOT(0)
41 W=RDOT(1)
42 IFP<>0THENCIRCLE1,Q,W,U
43 IFP<>0THEN50
44 IFQ>G-35ANDQ<G+35THEN46
45 GOTO47
46 IFW>F-25ANDW<F+25THENO=9:GOSUB69:GOTO
2
47 IFQ>L-35ANDQ<L+35THEN49
48 GOTO50
49 IFW>H-25ANDW<H+25THENO=9:GOSUB69:GOTO
2
50 IFQ>315THENQ=315
51 IFQ<5THENQ=5
52 IFW>150THENW=150
53 IFW<40THENW=40
54 IFP<>0THEN56
55 IFQ>230ANDQ<310ANDW>S-10ANDW<S+10THEN
P=-1:GOSUB70
56 CIRCLE1,Q,W,U:PAINT1,Q,W
57 IFP=-1THENU=3
58 IFP=0THEN30
59 IFQ=159ORQ=160ORQ=161THEN60:ELSE61
60 IFW=94ORW=95ORW=96THENO=9:GOSUB68:GOT
02
61 IFP=-2THEN30
62 P=-2:SCNCLR:GOTO4
63 CIRCLE1,160,95,150,60
64 CIRCLE1,160,95,6,3
65 CIRCLE1,160,95,80,30
66 GOTO30
67 GRAPHIC0,1:END
68 CHAR,13,17,"YOU HAVE DONE IT.":CHAR,1
6,18,"NEXT HOLE":J=J+1:GOSUB71:GOTO76
69 CHAR1,2,6,"IN SAND":CHAR,3,8,"TRAP":C
HAR,2,12,"START":CHAR,2,14,"AGAIN":GOTO7
1
70 COLOR1,1:CHAR,1,10,"YOU'RE ON":CHAR,3
,12,"THE":CHAR,2,14,"GREEN"
71 COLOR1,6,3
72 FORD=1TO7
73 SOUND1,230,10:SOUND1,500,10
74 NEXTD
75 RETURN
76 GRAPHIC0,1:PRINT"■■■■■NUMBER OF SHO
TS";R:PRINT"■■■■■NUMBER OF THE HOLE";J
77 PRINT"□□□□□□■■■■■□■SCORE■"
78 PRINT"■■■■■■■■PRESS ANY KEY TO CO
NTINUE"
79 GETKEYA$
80 GOTO2
```



...e on the green, it's time to test those putting skills.

THE Handic supermarket basket is full of 'goodies' for your Commodore 64. Here is a brief description of what they all are! Don't forget – if you need any more information, either clip the coupon (and tick column 'A') or give us a ring.

1 Mon 64
An outstanding Machine Code Monitor (cartridge based)

2 Teledata
Communication cartridge for use with the CBM 64, link up with Databases like the bank or supermarket, over the telephone lines.

3 Superbox 64
An expansion unit for the Commodore, which features three independant cartridge slots; IEEE interface that is totally transparent; has multi-user capabilities with IEEE; and a re-set switch which activates a cold start on the computer. This unit will connect up to 3 cartridges at the same time, which makes frequent altering between programs simple and reduces wear on the cartridge slot.

4 Vic Rel
Vic Rel (Rel 64) is a relay cartridge for the CBM 64 and Vic 20 which has almost limitless applications, such as control of burglar alarms, garage doors, door locks, electric radiators, lamps , transmitters, model railways, etc.etc.

5 Disc-based games
Handic have a set of disc based games for the Commodore 64, all are great fun and superb colour graphics. At around 9.95 each. Why not treat yourself to a few?
Quantity discounts are available on request – dealer enquiries are also welcome.



6 Diary 64
An ideal program for keeping track of telphone numbers, addresses, appointments, schedules, in fact the ideal time manager for all you sieve-heads.

7 Stat 64
The statistical CBM cartridge which ads 19 new commands to your Basic language. An excellent programming aid for all you statisticians.

8 Graf 64
A CBM cartridge that turns solutions of equations into graphical analysis, what you might call a plotter-jotter.

9 Handic Auto Modem
This modem is the expanded version of the Videotex modem (see illustration). When used together with the Handic Teledata Base 64 this unit enables you to set up your own data base with information.



Videotex Split-Speed Modem
This Split-Speed modem is especially designed to connect with computers over the telephone lines, its facilities include auto-dialling, line control, etc. (BT approval applied for).

10 RS232
A standard V.24 (RS232) interface for connecting the CBM 64 to printers and other peripherals.

11 Bridge 64
A cartridge bridge game for the intelligentsia.

12 Forth 64
A Forth generation programming language for people who know what they are talking about, and want to know even more.

Checklist



COMMODORE 64–SOFTWARE		A	B
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WORD RESULT	316.25		
CALC & WORD RESULT	534.75		

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CALC RESULT 700 SERIES	258.75		
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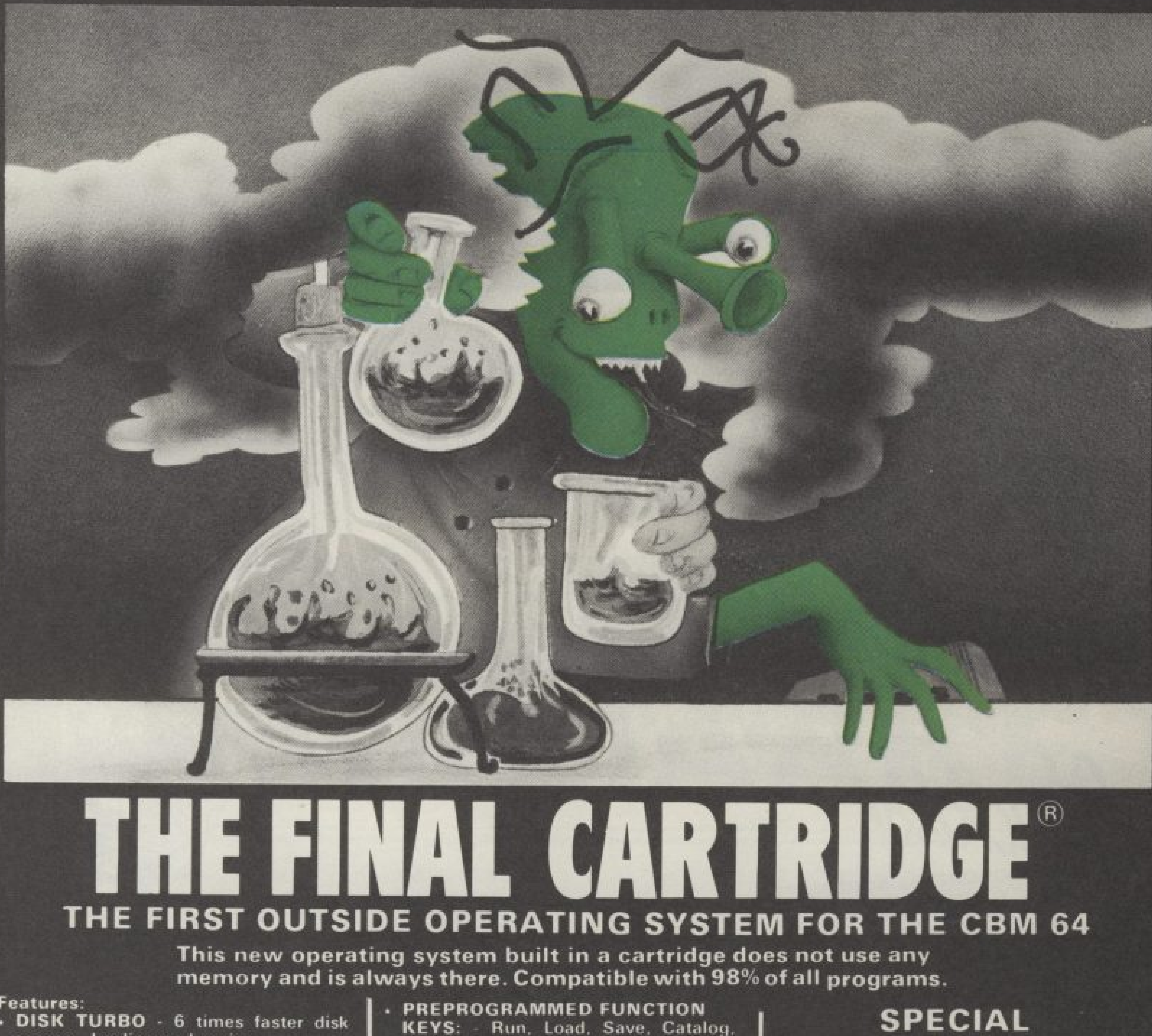
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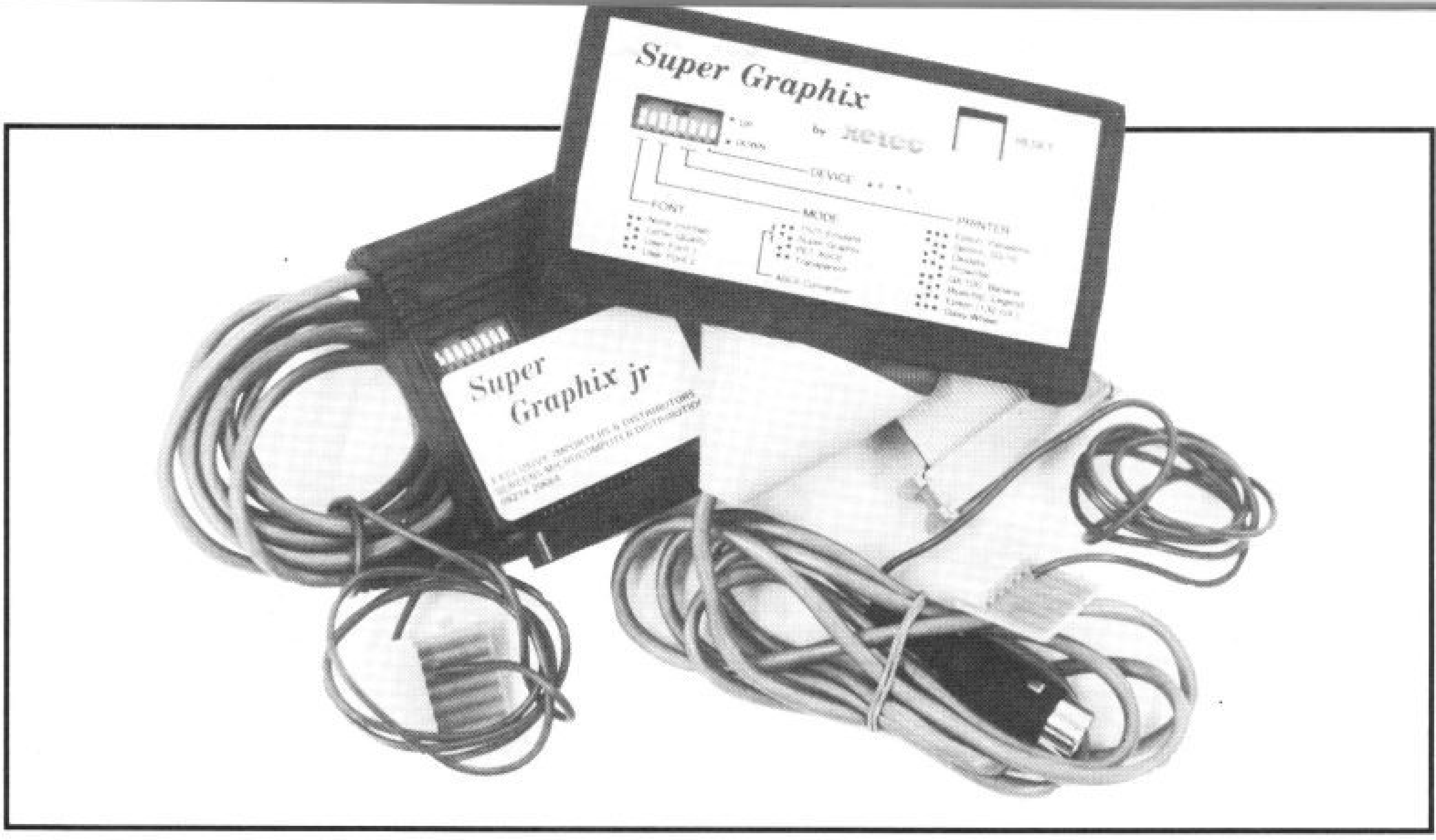
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Interface with pace

Xetec Super Graphix interfaces reviewed

by Chris Durham

At last, a series of two Centronics interface adaptors that provide really top-class facilities at a price you can afford. That's the claim from Xetec for its Super Graphix and Super Graphix Jr devices. At £49.95 and £69.95, they deserve a long hard look.

Ever since the humble Vic-20 first appeared, users have wanted to plug in better printers than offered by Commodore at the home end of the market. Commodore messed things up by fitting only a serial IEEE port, thus ensuring you couldn't fit a Centronics printer without a struggle. Even the User Port was not ideal since it needed software to drive a printer from this port and this often clashed with program software.

Fortunately, a number of companies saw the potential and produced interfaces to convert the serial IEEE output into a Centronics compatible form. Even this wasn't the end of the story however, since Commodore printers can produce the famous Commodore graphics characters; not so a Centronics printer. At least, that was the case before the current trend towards intelligent interfaces that can make a Centronics printer react to the same commands as the Commodore versions, including printing all the graphics characters.

Up to now though, no single interface seemed to do everything; graphics, listings, WP text, hi-res screen dumps, extra character fonts and finally, near letter quality (NLQ) printing. That could be set to change however, with the introduction of the new **Super Graphix** and **Super Graphix jr** interfaces by the American *Xetec* company. They're distributed in this country by *Screens Microcomputer Distribution* in Middlesex. Let's start with Little Brother.

Super Graphix jr.

The two interfaces are very similar in that the jr. model is a slightly cheaper (£49.95), and hence slightly less sophisticated version of the Super Graphix. Since this is the case, all features and comments made about this interface apply equally to both, unless otherwise stated.

Using the jr.

Even though this is the smaller of the two models, it has features which other interfaces fail to provide at nearly twice the price. The most obvious 'extra' is the ability to give most Centronics dot-matrix printers an NLQ (near letter quality) option. I have always thought that the Epson series of printers produced perfectly acceptable text for word processing applications, but a glance at the normal mode compared to the NLQ mode will show just what a difference it makes.

This option is selected by one of the switches on the DIL switch bank on the body of the interface; unlike many such switches however, these can all be altered while the interface is powered up and the changes are immediately implemented. There are eight switches in all, controlling such things as the printer selection, auto line feed, device number and code. The last of these determines how the interface reacts to the commands sent.

Modes of Operation

The jr has four modes of operation: 1525 Emulation, Super Graphix jr, ASCII conversion and Transparent. The last of these merely passes all characters and commands straight through to the printer. The ASCII conversion changes the Commodore character codes to the standard ASCII codes; these two modes being all that some interfaces provide.

It is the other two modes that really make the jr good value. The 1525 Emulation is really one of the best I have come across. I have used it on graphics programs that can only print on a Commodore printer, with perfect results; better than any other interfaces I have tested.

The Super Graphix jr mode is very similar to the 1525 Emulation mode, but allows extra facilities.

A number of interfaces I have tested will print out the control codes as readable strings instead of the reversed graphics characters. The jr gives not less than two different ways of printing control codes and four different ways of printing graphics:

- as normal graphic characters and reversed graphic control codes like the 1525.
- as mnemonics for the control codes (eg [CLR] instead of a reversed heart).
- by keystrokes, i.e. showing which key to press to get the graphic character required (e.g. the 'club' symbol would be printed as [SX], which means SHIFT X).
- by ASCII value, (eg the 'club' symbol would be shown as [120]).

```
This is the normal Epson single pass quality

This is the normal Epson 'emphasised' quality

This is the Super Graphix NLQ quality print

This is one of the downloadable fonts named SHADOW

This is another downloaded font called MANHATTAN
```

Super Graphix gives a choice of no less than twenty font styles.

The results are extremely easy to read once you have decided which method suits you best. The 'Super' mode also passes any non-1525 codes direct to the printer, enabling you to use functions which are not otherwise available on the 1525.

Minor criticisms

The jr is mounted inside a 64 cartridge case, with a Centronics plug soldered directly to the PCB. This means that the whole unit hangs on the Centronics connector on the printer; something I was not very happy about, since the cartridge case prevented the locking clips from seating correctly. Also, the cable comes out of the cartridge on the side nearest the paper, although this only caused problems when using roll paper. I understand from the suppliers however, that the casing has now been modified to permit the locking clips to engage properly.

My second criticism concerns the method of connecting the power supply (this applies to both models). The main cable terminates in a DIN plug which connects to the serial port on the computer or disk drive and is quite long enough. However, there is a single red cable which connects inside the serial plug and terminates in a cassette port connector and a small piece of PCB. The PCB is merely to allow the cassette plug to piggy back onto the connector since the latter is now occupying the cassette port. Unfortunately the cassette plug does not seat properly and the whole thing seemed less than robust; it didn't actually cause me any problems, but then I don't use the cassette very much anyway. Again, the suppliers have indicated that the connector will be made more secure in future versions.

The manual

This is a 28 page booklet which contains everything you might need to know about using the interface. It has a number of summaries, enabling quick checks on the facilities and how to get them, plus a trouble-shooting guide. There is an index as well as a table of contents.

There are programs to do screen dumps in both hi and lo-res for the Vic-20 and Commodore 64, including a machine-code program for the latter. There is even a listing of the control codes in the different forms which you would see in a program listing.

Graphix Super

This is the top range interface, containing its own microprocessor and 8K memory. In spite of this, the price is a comparatively modest £69.95. The main physical differences between this and the jr is that it's housed in a Vic-type cartridge with a short ribbon cable connection to the printer; much superior to the jr. It does however, still suffer from the same problem as regards the power supply.

This unit has the same DIL switch bank of eight switches, with almost the same functions. The main difference is that instead of an auto line feed switch, you can select one of two stored character fonts (in addition to the NLQ option). The 8K RAM can be used as a printer buffer when no fonts are in use (or only one font).

Extra functions

The top model has all the functions of the jr plus a number of even more interesting features. There is a disk included with this model, which in addition to demo programs etc, includes no less than twenty different character fonts of which any two can be stored in the interface at any one time.

An excellent feature of this font storage is that the fonts ae retained even when the power is turned off for a short period (up to fifteen minutes). This means that even if you are using a cartridge based WP, you can download the character fonts into the interface, turn off the computer, insert the WP cartridge and then power up again and use the stored fonts to print your letters.

In addition to using the switches to alter the settings, most of the options can be set using ESC codes. This means that you can alter the fonts or select NLQ etc from within your WP program, providing it can embed ASCII codes in the text. If you wish to restore the interface to its power-up conditions there is a reset button which does just that; without destroying the fonts in memory.

Unlike the jr. this model will also support superscripts, subscripts and different print pitches when in NLQ modes, in addition to the underlining and bold printing which both interfaces can do.

There are also built-in functions to do screen dumps, using additional secondary addresses when opening the print channel. These enable even simpler programs to be written to do both hi and lo-res dumps, again on both computers; the 64 hi-res dump is only four lines of Basic. In fact, there are no less than 16 secondary addresses, plus a 'command channel' with 23 commands to allow you to set up the interface from your own Basic programs. As with the jr, the manual is excellent and shows the function of all these channels and commands. There is also a separate sheet showing the switch settings to use with a number of popular WP and graphics programs.

Problems encountered

I only experienced one problem with the *Super Graphix*. As I have already mentioned, the DIL switches can be altered while the power is still on. About two minutes after the change, the printer suddenly stopped. The 'READY' light was out and turning the printer off, then on, failed to clear the condition. When I touched the interface, to see if that was still connected correctly, it was extremely hot; almost too hot to touch, yet two minutes earlier it had been quite cool.

After speaking to the suppliers, it seems possible that the switch had not gone right over and was therefore making a faulty connection. Certainly the unit still functions correctly and the problem has not arisen again, despite leaving it powered-up for several hours at a time. The moral must be therefore, that if you make any changes, you must ensure the switches are pushed across to the limit of their travel.

Conclusions

At £50 and £70 neither of these interfaces is exactly cheap, yet compared to the other interfaces I have tested they represent excellent value for money. They both have a range of facilities which enables you to use your Centronics printer to the full, with the *Super Graphix* providing facilities I have not seen on any other interface.

The minor criticisms regarding the connection of the jr and the power supply connector on the cassette port are being looked at by the manufacturer, but these cannot detract from the fact that both of these units are worth a second look if you are in the market for a Centronics interface. □

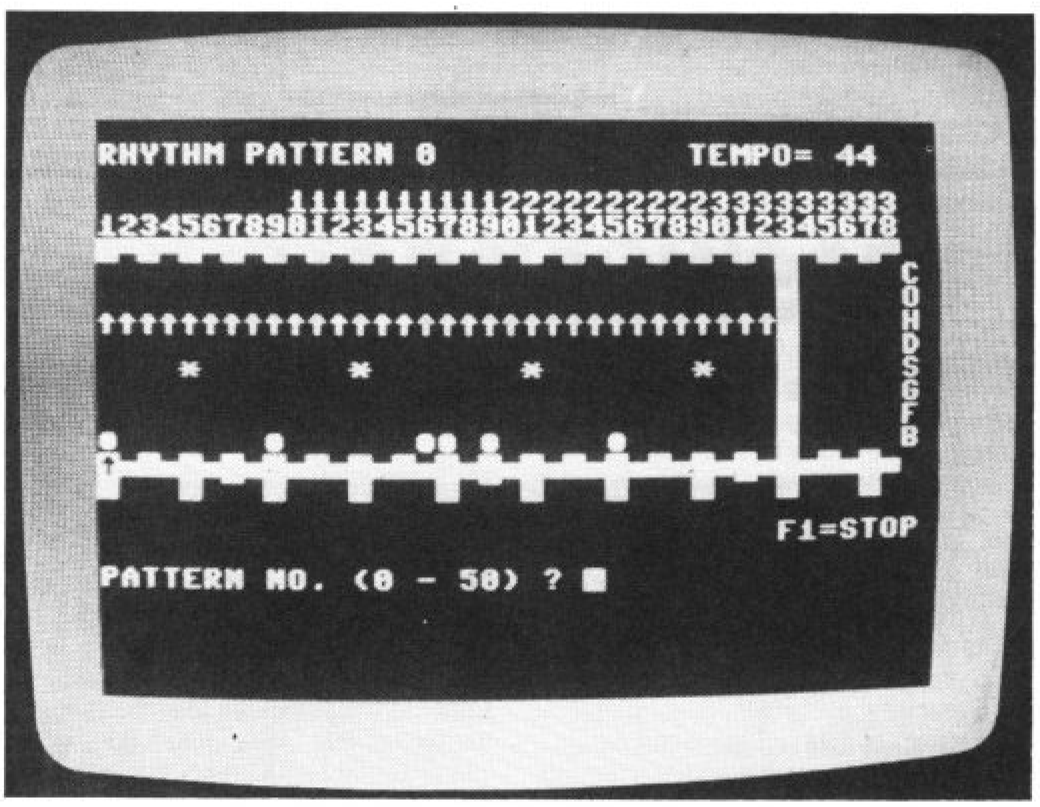
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BEAT! BOX

Syntron Digidrum reviewed

by Fred Reid

When the likes of Phil Collins start using a drum machine, you know they're here to stay. But you can get into the act too, with the Digidrum package, that turns your Commodore 64 into a really sophisticated drum machine, and all for £65. We brought the house down testing it out.



Drum machines really came into their own with the advent of digitally sampled sound. You 'record' a real drum sound and store it in the machine's digital memory so that it can be reproduced and modified at will.

Since even a short sound needs a huge amount of data which must be accessed quickly, a computer is ideal for the job. In fact, the top of the range drum machines are little more than dedicated computers.

It's taken a surprisingly long time for these principles to be applied to the humble 64, but at last *Syntron*, a Dutch manufacturer, has produced the **Digidrum** package. Digidrum utilises the memory and processing power of your 64 to create not only real drum sounds, but also sequences and compositions.

The drum kit

The Digidrum package costs £65 and contains everything you need to turn your 64 into a studio quality drum synthesizer. The hardware consists of a cartridge that fits on the user-port, and the software comes on a disk (a cassette version is on the way). The cartridge is the usual sized black box, with a jack socket on the rear for connection to your stereo amplifier or tape recorder. You will need this socket, as you don't get any sound from your TV. But you can connect direct to the sound input of a video monitor if you have one.

Also on the rear is a phono socket that produces a synchronisation pulse. When this signal is connected to the 'clock in' socket of another drum machine, or a synthesizer, complex musical compositions can be created and performed in perfect time.

Loading the beat

The software consists of the main driver program, a quick loader, and a couple of sound and rhythm files. The software is totally devoid of such luxuries as hi-res graphics, DOS commands and the like, and there is a very good reason for this, to reserve the maximum amount of memory for sound storage. The Digidrum software does indeed use just about every scrap of the 64's available RAM!

After loading (about 90 seconds on disk), you get a menu with the options for programming patterns, composing songs (these are just lists of patterns to be se-

quenced together), options for loading and saving patterns and songs to and from disk, options for loading and saving sound files, as well as a disk directory function, an option for erasing all patterns and songs, and an option to adjust the tempo.

The software automatically loads in its standard sound set and a demo rhythm, so if you are plugged in to an amplifier, you are all ready to go.

Digidrum provides for eight sounds to be present in the machine at any time. The standard set of sounds contains a cymbal, open and closed hi-hat sounds, 3 tom-toms, snare and bass drum. Pretty comprehensive, I think.

Selecting the 'program rhythm patterns' option allows you to view any of the 51 possible pattern charts. The pattern is visibly displayed as a horizontal bar-chart, its 38 columns representing the 38 steps available in each pattern. The vertical component of the chart contains the symbols representing the 8 possible drum sounds.

Use the cursor to select the step you wish to program, and press the initial letter of the drum you wish to be played there, that's all there is to it!

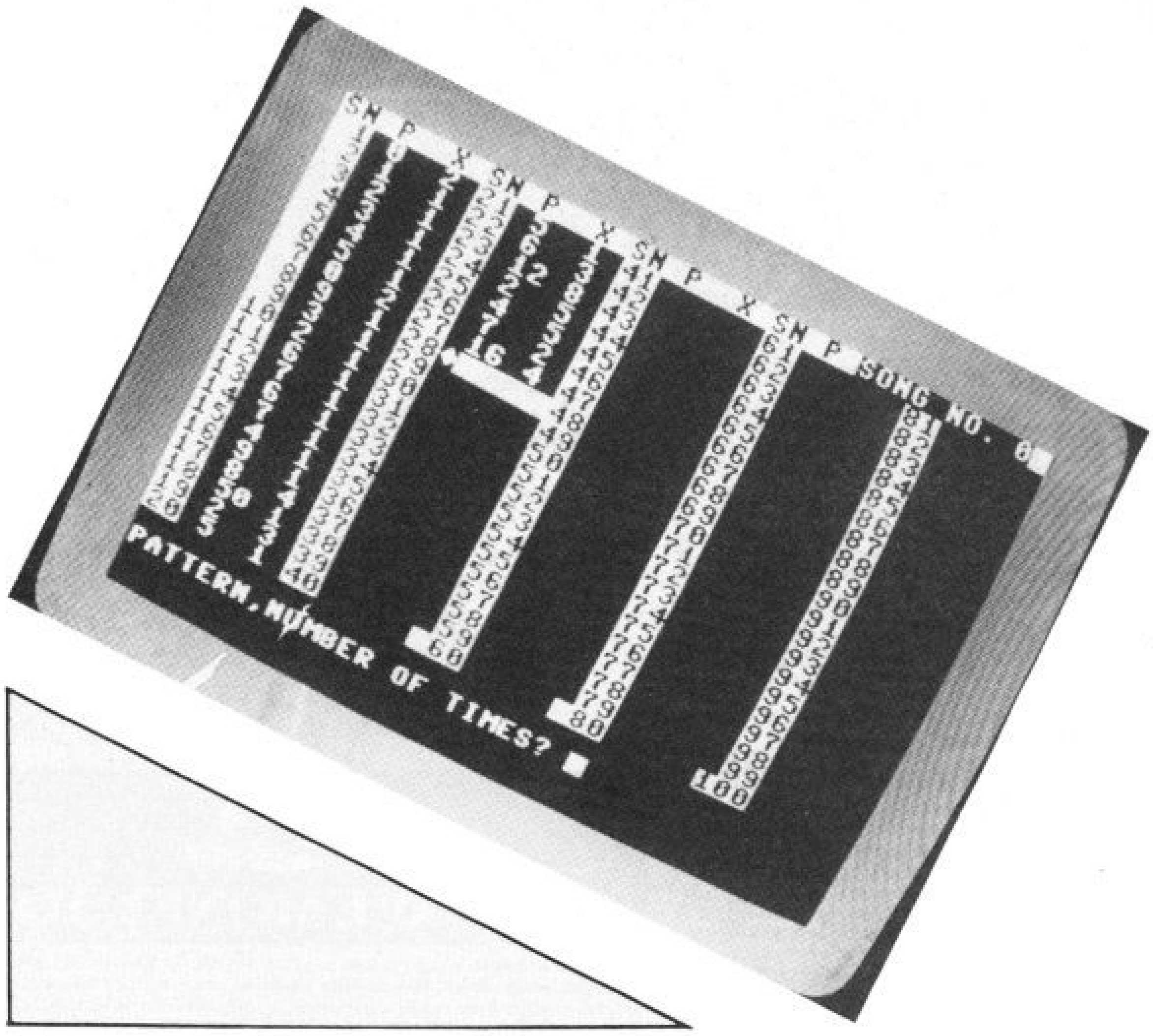
Several restrictions are imposed here; as in real life, there is a limit to the number of drums you can 'hit' at one time. For example, you obviously can't hit the open hi-hat at the same time as the closed hi-hat, and you can only hit one tom at a time. Given these restrictions, it is still possible to create complex rhythms and build up sound textures that will boggle your brain!

Store your drums

Digidrum's file handler automatically labels files on disk according to their nature. All sound files are prefixed with the initial letter of the sound slot they are intended to fill.

For example, a file prefixed as 'B/filename' would be loaded as a sound file into the bass drum slot. This doesn't mean that the sound you load in is a bass drum sound, only that the sound will occupy the same memory space as the bass drum from the standard sound set, and the rhythm patterns will play that sound as if it was a bass drum.

Similarly, any or all the sounds currently in memory can be saved to disk and rhythm patterns and songs are dealt with in the same way.



Selecting the 'program rhythm patterns' . . . The pattern is visibly displayed as a horizontal bar-chart.

As well as the standard sound set, the Digidrum system disk contains an alternative sound set called *Glass Fantasy*. This sound set appears to have been created by sampling the sounds made by hitting various bits of glass kitchenware, and the end result is quite spectacular and an excellent demonstration of Digidrum's capabilities!

Drums on disk

To complement the original Digidrum package, Syntron have produced a double sided disk, literally crammed with alternative sounds ranging from the obscure to the ridiculous. Everything from cymbals to cow bells, rimshots to rattlesnakes, as well as a very nice assortment of latin percussion sounds, and variations on the standard set. Also included, ironically enough, are some true electronic drum sounds!

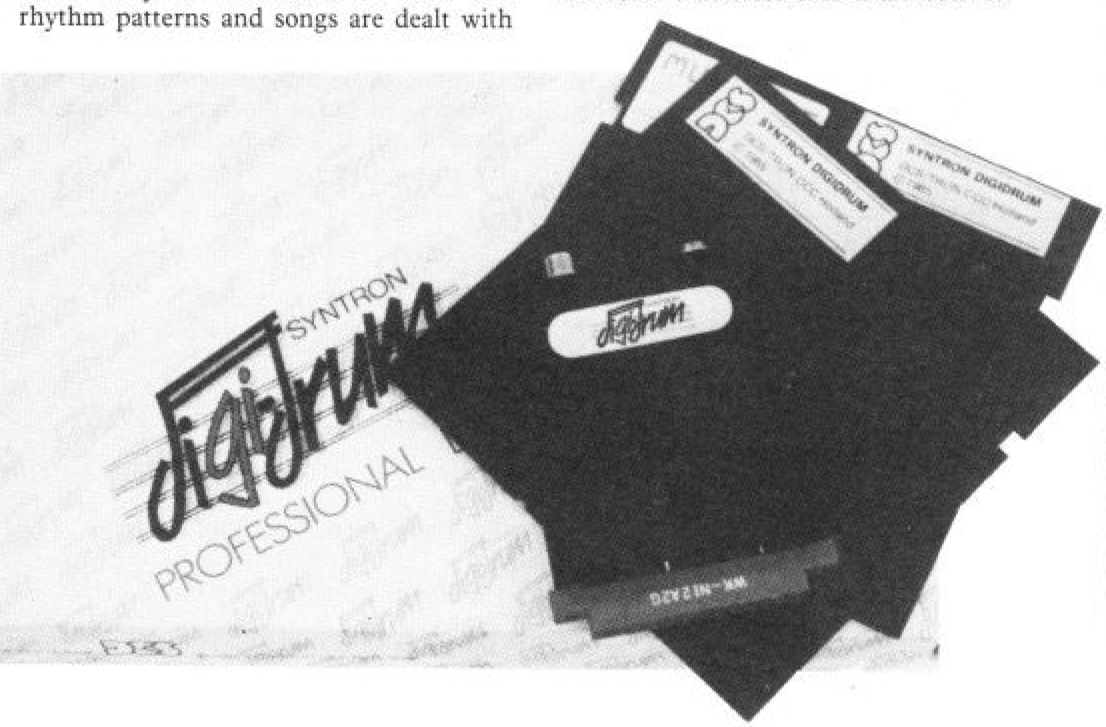
The Digidrum system won't stop there either! Vince Hill Associates, the UK distributors, assured me that a whole range of extra sound disks will shortly be available, as well as a facility to sample your own sounds.

For those of you who are adventurous, I discovered that the sound files contain pure sound data, and it is possible to load a sound data block into memory and turn it back to front! When the Digidrum software is re-loaded, the reversed sounds take on a whole new dimension.

The manual I received was a preliminary photocopy, sometimes a little too literal in its translation from the original Dutch version, but it more than adequately covered all aspects of Digidrum.

Conclusions

To sum up, the Syntron Digidrum system represents outstanding value for money when compared with similarly priced self-contained drum machines, and scores again with its 'real' sounds, and on-screen programming. The software is very easy to use although rather brief, and does just about everything it should, although some file handling commands for scratching and re-naming files would have been nice. Still, you can't have everything. □



- Syntron Digidrum
- Vince Hill Associates
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  01-883 1335
- Price: £65
  £16.50 (soundset disk)

GOING UP TO 128

Now that the long-awaited Commodore 128 is finally in the shops, (though not yet accompanied by the equally long-awaited 1571 disk drive nor yet the double-disk 1572 drive already on sale in the States), the question for the serious user who has tolerated the 64's limited memory, its 40-column screen and the speed limitations of the 1541 must be: is this the time to upgrade?

And having tested three of the familiar 64 packages now made available in 128 format, Precision's *Superscript* and *Superbase*, and Audiogenic's *Micro-Swift* spreadsheet, my considered advice to every business user considering the investment of the £250 or so it will cost to buy the computer on its own is: hesitate no longer, but run do not walk to your nearest dealer, and get one.

This month, we start a two-part series on business uses for the new 128. In the first part, we're looking at the 128's upgrade potential for businesses already using the 64. Will existing software and peripherals work with the new machine? What is the cost and benefit of upgrading?

Part 1 — C-128, the perfect 64 upgrade

by Karl Dallas

What disk drive?

Unfortunately, Commodore have taken fright at the price-cutting that is endemic in the British market-place, especially in the pre-Christmas period, and have held back the launch of the 1571 disk drive until some time in the New Year, as yet unspecified. Instead, they have packaged the 128 with the 1570, a sort of in-between drive with the superior speed of the 1571 and the single-sided format of the 1541, at an overall price of £449.99.

And if you ask me whether you should get a 1570 — a product unique to the UK market — or live with the sluggish 1541 until Commodore see sense, then that's a question that's much harder for me to answer.

I've never used a 1570, but Commodore tell me that it is exactly similar to the 1571, except it lacks the more advanced machine's double-sided disk option, and if this is true, then customers may find it still an attractive buy. Presumably, therefore, every reference to the 1571 that follows can be applied to the 1570, apart from the double-sided option.

It's only later, as the disk begins to fill up, that the single-sided limitation will become obvious, especially if you decide to sample the wealth of CP/M business software that should become available, including some which can cost you as little as £1.50 a disk (no, that's not a misprint, I *did* say thirty bob!)

This CP/M "public domain" software can be had on single-sided as well as double-sided disks, of course, but this obviously may involve some disk-swapping, splitting of large data files etc, which again is a problem that will creep up on you as time goes on. One thing I can say, of course, is that the the 1570 doesn't look half as nice as the 1571, since it uses the ugly 1541-type box, rather than the sleek, half-height box of the 1571.

This "shall I, shan't I?" dilemma is a bit of a pity since with the 1571, Commodore have offered something that hasn't been available for the mainstream serious buyer since the days of the Pets, when new models were generally "upwards compatible" with the older ones. So if you had got used to a particular bit of software, then that would still run on the new machines. With the launch of the Vic and, more specifically, the 64, this possibility became difficult, if not impossible.

Now, having used a 128-plus-1571 combination, and software optimised to get the best possible results from it, in terms of memory utilisation, I can say sincerely that Commodore have a low-price business machine that it is possible to take seriously once again and one, what's more, that provides a comparatively painless upgrade path.

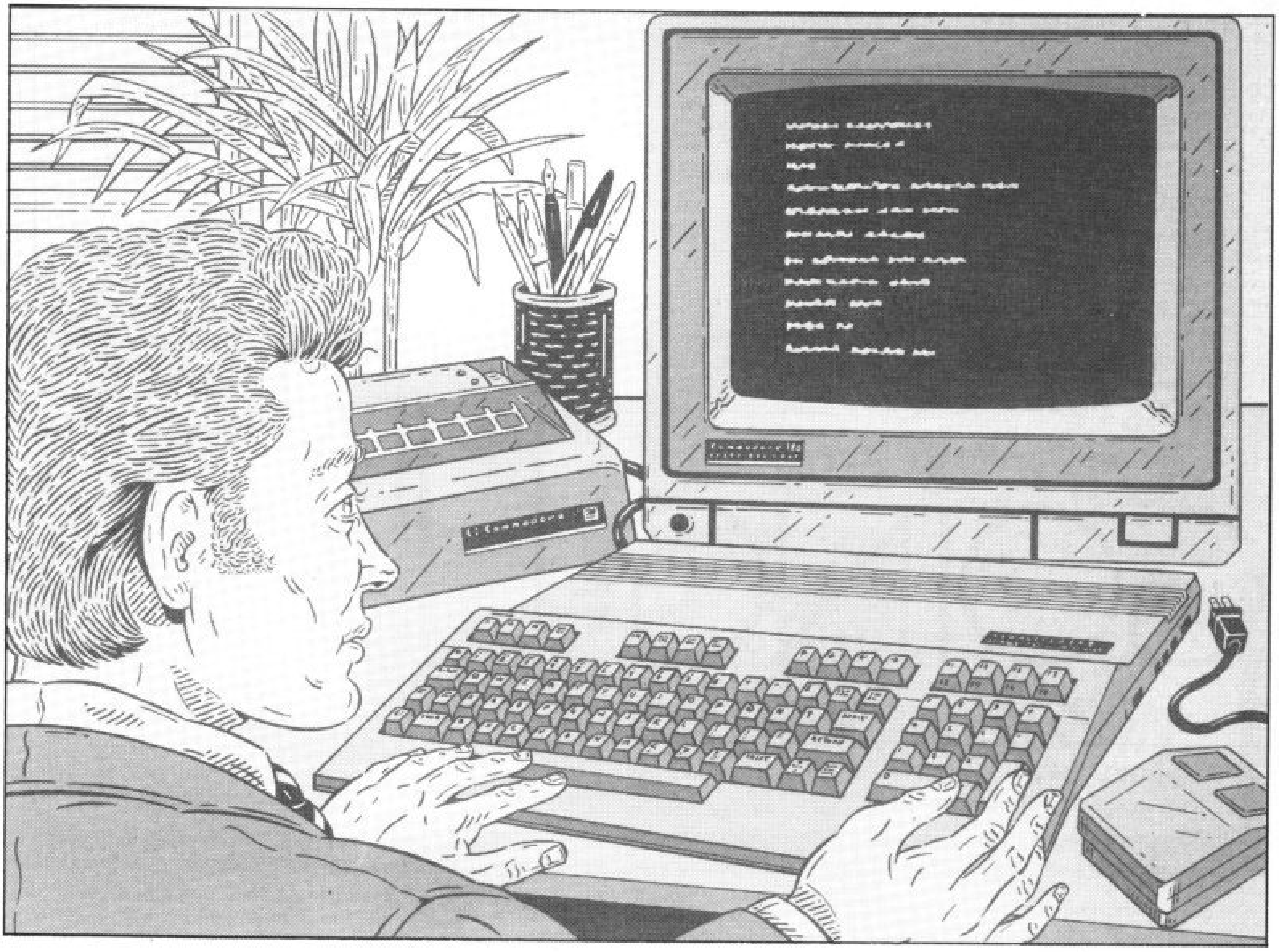
What I mean is that if you have a 64 and a 1541, you can change over to a 128 immediately, running all your existing 64 software in the 128's "64" mode with no more hassle than typing the words: GO 64 and answering the computer's "Are you sure?" safeguard (since changing modes on the 128 loses whatever's in memory) with an affirmative, each time you power up.

Even after you've got a 1571, you can continue to use the program and data disks, because the disk drive can sense whether it's dealing with a 1541 or 1571 disk format, and adjust itself accordingly. And *Superscript* and *Superbase* are both configured to be able to handle a 1541 daisy-chained on to the serial port of the new drive, so that 1541-formatted data files can be transferred to the new medium with the minimum of fuss and bother.

The monitor

The main problem which users of the 128 are likely to encounter is to do with the difficulty of obtaining a reasonable 80-column display on anything but the dedicated 1902 colour monitor, which isn't available at the time of writing, and not even the price has been announced.

The 128 comes with three output sockets for the display: television-style RF



and monitor-style composite video, neither of which will display 80 characters, and a so-called RGBI (red-green-blue-intensity) output via a 9-pin D-socket, to which the 80-column display is sent.

I wired a single phono-type plug to this and connected it to the "monitor" socket on my Panasonic TV/monitor, and I saw 80 columns which were quite readable (see picture). But I wouldn't fancy working with it on a continual basis. I'm told that I had also reduced the available colours from 16 to eight, but in fact all the packages I viewed gave a monochrome display, though they have a built-in colour capability.

With this in mind, I connected the same lead to a Tatung green-screen monitor which is intended for 80-column display, and I got a much nicer, steadier display. This monitor costs less than £100, and Philips do some very good green-screen 80-column monitors that are even cheaper.

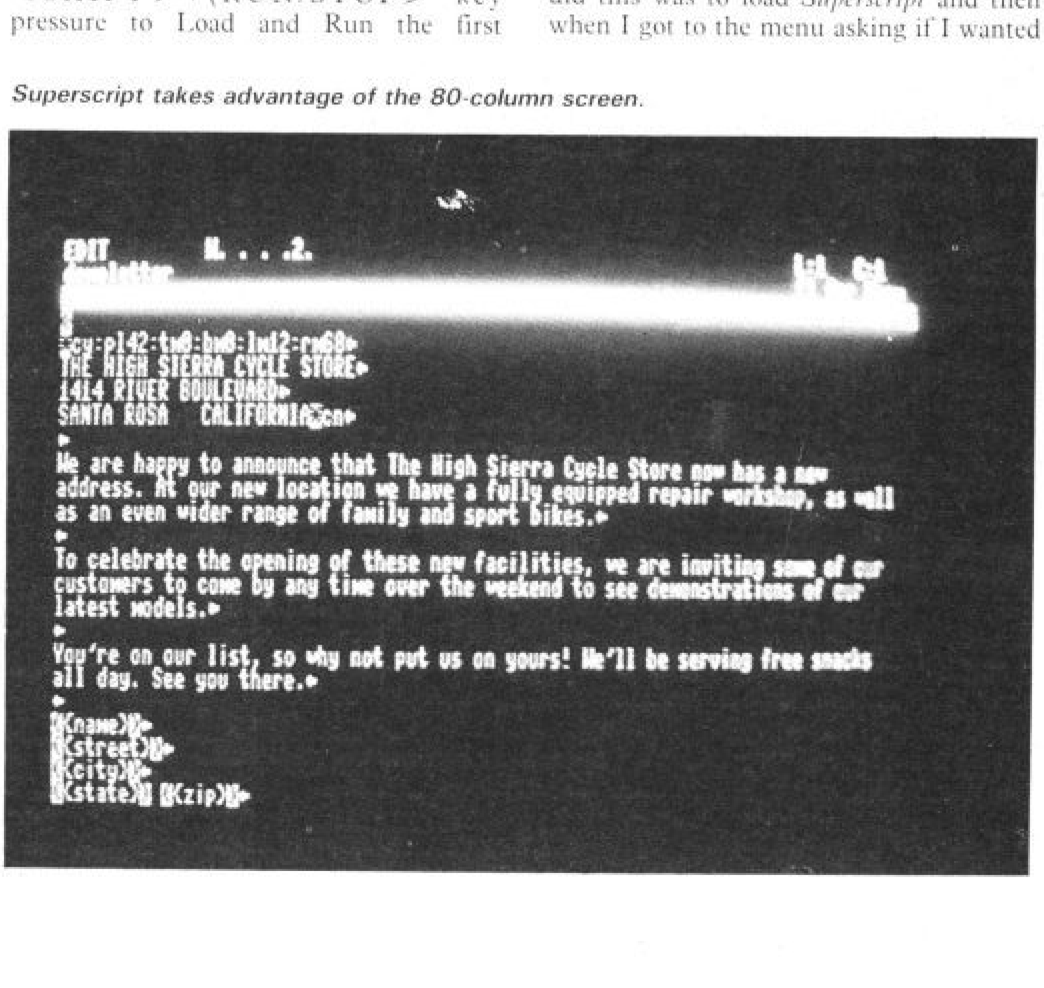
Personally, though colour *can* be useful in programs like spreadsheets to make the different columns easier to read, I am unconvinced about how necessary it really is to business generally.

Superscript and Superbase

Having sorted out the connections and display, it was time to look at the software, and it was then that I began to become a convinced advocate of the 128. As I loaded the programs, it became obvious immediately that I was using a much faster medium: 36 seconds to load *Superscript* compared with over two minutes on a 1541. Even before loading, things got quicker, because Basic 7.0 as supplied in the 128 ROM supports the <SHIFT> + (RUN/STOP> key pressure to Load and Run the first program on a disk, which was the practice on the later Pets as well as the SX-64 portable.

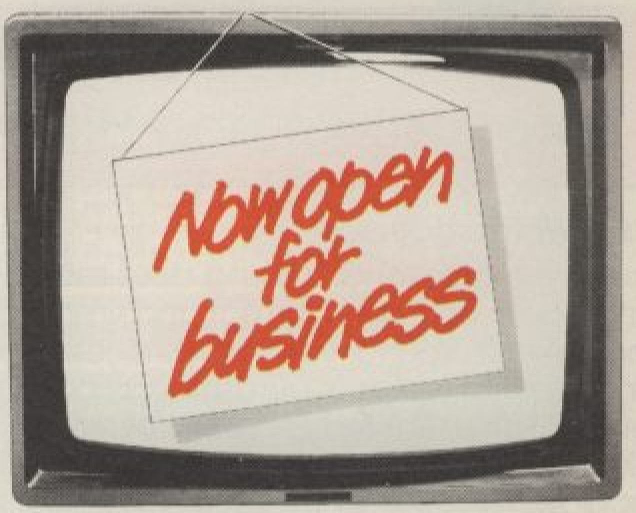
Then the 128K memory really came into its own when I loaded *Superscript* and *Superbase* alongside each other. The way I did this was to load *Superscript* and then when I got to the menu asking if I wanted

Superscript takes advantage of the 80-column screen.



Stop playing games–
Start earning money!

The computer that's been giving you such a fun time with games now gives you the chance to earn some money. Helping you with word processing, secretarial work and even running your own business. All because of the brilliant new word processing package, SuperScript from MicroPro — the makers of WordStar — the world's best selling word processing packages for microcomputers.



SuperScript writes letters, invoices, reports, tables, documents, it stores, edits and even checks spelling.

Versatile SuperScript SuperScript combines word processor, spelling checker, calculator and mail-merge facility, all in one package. So SuperScript gives you all the tools you need to produce high quality reports, tables, lists, personalised letters and prints labels quickly and efficiently.

Simple for the beginner If you are a newcomer to word processing, SuperScript puts you immediately at ease.
Each command is a single word, and for each command you simply move the cursor. You don't even have to type the command.

Good with numbers SuperScript allows you to extend your editing line up to 250 columns for wide documents like financial statements, and with decimal tabs it's easy to enter properly justified tables of numbers.
SuperScript's complete set of calculator functions can be used interactively or you can operate on numbers from the text of your document. Apart from the usual mathematical functions like add, subtract, multiply, divide, and percentages, you have the ability to add rows, columns or even whole tables.

Good with spelling, too The built-in spelling checker goes right through your text, checking for errors. You have the option to correct any error, ignore it, or add the word to its 30,000 word dictionary.

Editing options SuperScript gives you all the editing options of a business-style word processor, with full block manipulation for cut-and-paste; overtype or text insertion modes; search and replace with pattern matching and optional case discrimination; backward search, case shifts for single words or larger blocks of text. And much more.

Powerful for the experienced user SuperScript also gives you the ability to cut work down to a minimum by storing your own command sequences or text on single keys. This means that with a single keystroke you can reproduce commonly used phrases or multi-line addresses from a glossary, load in document formats or execute a pre-programmed sequence of operations.

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Please supply the following:

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If you are intending to use SuperScript for a specific purpose, we should be interested to have details. Thank You________

to use a previous work disk or format a new one, I pressed <CTRL> + <Q> which allowed me to LOAD Superbase. Alternatively, one could initialise a work disk, then get Superbase by using the <F1> <D>ocument <U>tility <S>uperbase key-press sequence, which I could also set up as one of the "macro" command strings which Superscript allows users to configure for their own purposes. These can be set up temporarily, merely by using the SET COMMAND menu option, or they can be set up within the work disk "defaults" file by typing in a single-line command string, in which the right-slash ("/") represents <F1>, an <Up-arrow> represents <CTRL> and <Up-arrow> followed by <M>, a carriage return.

Since each macro command consists basically of the initial letters you press to execute it from the main menu, it is very easy to create your own, which are executed merely by pressing <RUN/STOP> or <ESC>, followed by the key to which the macro has been assigned, so that <RUN/STOP> followed <S> LOADs Superbase.

The "Training" work disk supplied with the program includes a small "defaults" file of macros which are assigned to such frequently employed key sequences as "/gd" to scroll forward one screen, "/gu" to scroll one screen back, "/fbs" for bold printing, "/fus" for underlining (on suitable printer), and so on.

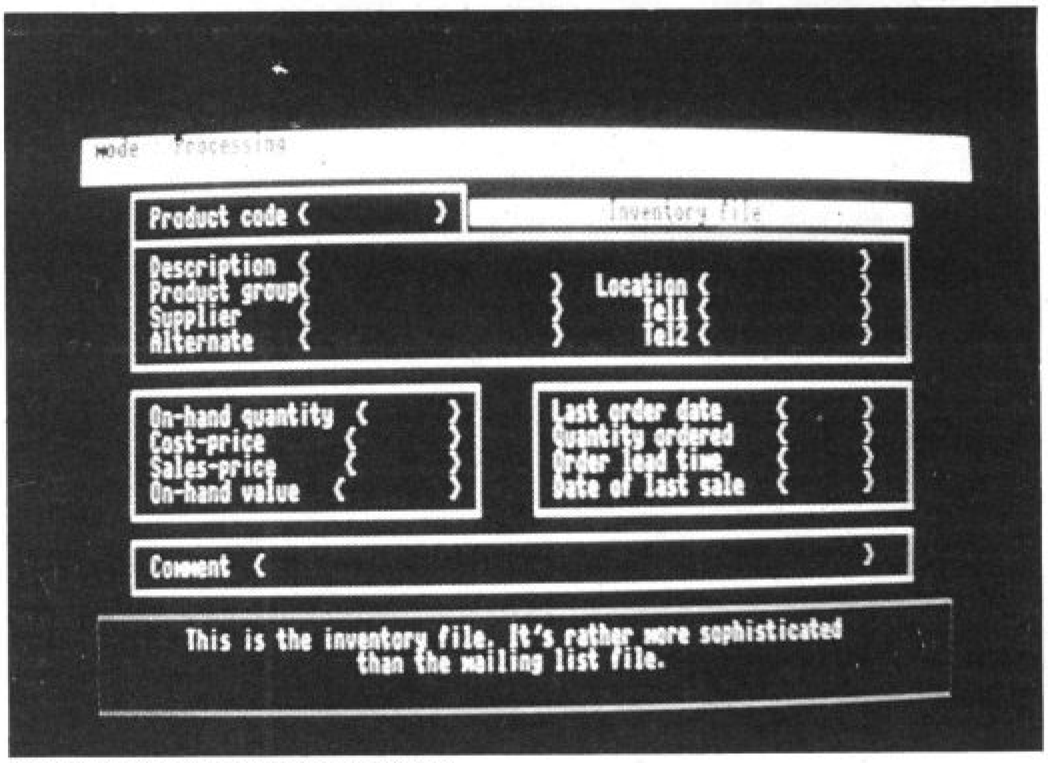
I must say I rather ignored the macro facility on my 64 version of Superscript, but the superior disk access speed encouraged me to make use of it, and things speeded up even more.

Having got *Superscript* and *Superbase* co-resident in memory, the fact that in general 8-bit chips can address only 64K memory was no longer the limitation that once it was, since the two programs divided up the 128K of RAM between them.

In my experience, a computer that can handle only one program at a time isn't much use in a business, because often when you are writing you need to check an invoice or an address database, to name only one example. While the *Superscript/Superbase* combination isn't what the jargon-merchants would call true concurrency, allowing each to occupy its own window on screen so that both could be viewed simultaneously, I found it quite easy to zip between them — again, I set up macros to make this easier.

Surprisingly, if you do this by telling *Superbase* you want to quit, the *Superbase* menu comes up instantly. To reverse the process, you type in "superscript" from the main menu (which can be abbreviated to "suP") followed by <RETURN> and Superscript returns, complete with whatever document was in memory at the time you quit.

The most obvious application of this co-residency is in mail-merging, producing personalised circular letters drawing the required data from *Superbase* files. Even without *Superbase*, *Superscript*, 64 and 128 both include quite sophisticated mail-

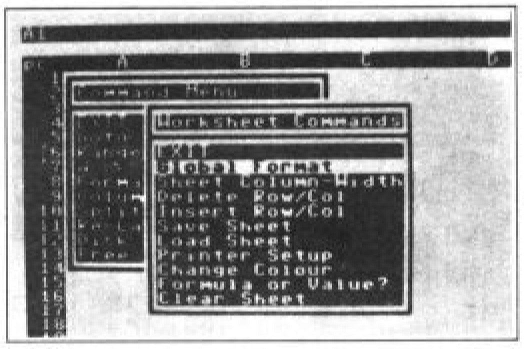


Inventory file on new calc Superbase

merge facilities, using Superscript-written merge files, but since much of this information is exactly the sort of thing you'd be holding in a database, the combination of the two programs is a natural development.

Indeed, Precision produced an earlier combination under the title of "Superoffice" for the 8296 business Pet, but that cost over £700, whereas Superscript for the 128 costs only £79.95, and Superbase for the 128 costs only £99.95 — that's a total of £179.90 for a package which is actually better, faster and neater than the old "Superoffice" (without the irritating delay on displaying keystrokes, which prevented it from being the best package for the 8000 series).

You can invoke *Superscript* from within *Superbase* with the "super*script*" — no capital initial — or "suP" command, but if



Pop-up menus make Swift the easiest spreadsheet around.

you are mail-merging, parameters can be added, like a list produced from within Superbase, as follows: **suP from ''h8list''', ''dlletterfile <Up-arrow>m/pmp''** which will LOAD the document "letterfile", and execute a mail-merge using the records indexed in "h8list".

By the way, the maximum length of a Superbase program, has now been increased to 62K from the 4K when Superbase was originally launched.

I've made no secret of the fact that I believe the two individual programs are just about unbeatable value for the 64, and that opinion is considerably reinforced by these 128 versions. Owners of previous versions can upgrade for £20, which is the closest thing to a bargain you'll see this year.

Swift spreadsheet

I feel similarly about Audiogenic's *Swift* spreadsheet, which I welcomed when it first came out. The pop-up menus which make it the easiest spreadsheet around (minus the macro and database facilities which make *Vizastar* so powerful but at a fraction of the price) are still present, plus the 80-column screen and an enlarged sheet size of 16256 cells (64 horizontal × 254 vertical), compared with 6604 on the 64, at a price only a fiver dearer than the previous version (£24.95 compared with £19.95) which is really what you might call another enormous bargain.

Conclusions

On the strength of these three business packages alone (and there will be many more) the 128 forms the basis for a respectable system that puts the valiant 64 into the shade. You're getting comparable processing power to 'true business' machines at a price that would allow you to buy only software for the average PC.

However, if it also proves possible to run world famous software like WordStar and Perfect Writer on this machine in its CP/M mode — and at the moment I haven't had time to check out whether the claimed compatibility is a fact — it will become even more irresistible. By this time next month, however, I should be in a position to Reveal All, including some of that incredible £1.50 software, plus how to get it.

New-Look Micronet

What's Micronet offering the 64?

Micronet has never offered the modem-owning Commodore 64 user anything like the service it heaps on to the BBC and Spectrum machines. But that's all set to change: Micronet is all set to tempt 64 buffs away from arch-rivals Compunet with a new package of goodies. Ken McMahon reports.

It's nearly a year now since the Commodore 64 was deemed worthy of its own area in the pages of *Micronet 800*. Between then and now not a great deal has happened, at least as far as 64 owners are concerned. OK, every now and then a new title was added to the meagre stock of telesoftware available. Occasionally a new feature, news item, or review appeared. I can remember accessing the 64 Microbase on two occasions three months apart and nearly all the material had remained unchanged. You could almost see the cobwebs hanging off it.

All that is now due to change, but it has taken Micronet a whole year to get around to providing a decent service for Commodore users. Phil Godsell, Micronet's Software Manager, blames technical problems with the communications software. It's certainly true that Micronet's telesoftware has been bugged with downloading problems. Not only were Commodore subscribers having problems downloading the stuff, Micronet were struggling to get it up there in the first place. Thankfully, from everyone's point of view, these problems have been sorted out by Y2 Computing's *Mustang* software.

Mustang also allows the full range of Micronet facilities to be accessed including downloading of telesoftware using the Commodore modem. It has come to the time when *Compunet* subscriptions will (or will not) be renewed for the first time. Perhaps Micronet have woken up to the fact that they are not going to tempt the dissident Compunetters over the wall with old news and software.

SOLELY 64

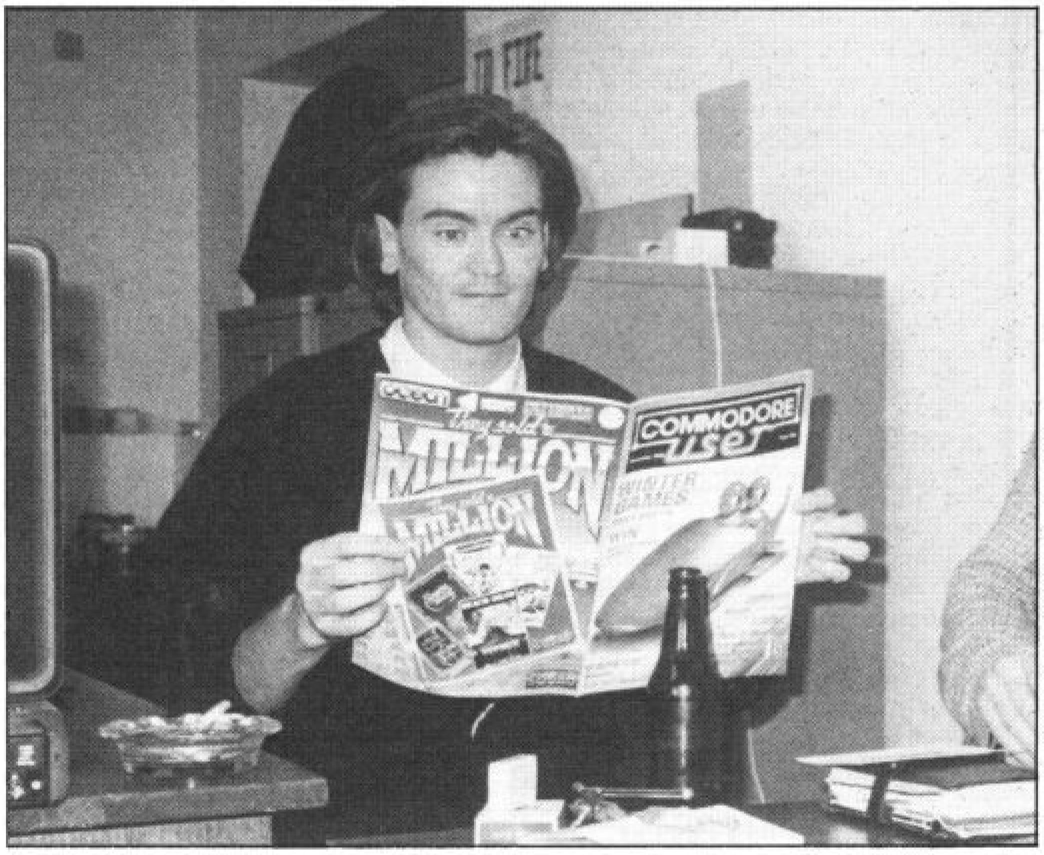
The main thrust of Micronet's drive to recruit Commodore users in their hordes is the *Solely 64* area: four hundred and fifty frames of news, reviews, technical help, and general chit chat about the subject closest to the hearts of all 64 owners.

Solely 64 is administered and organised not by Micronet, but by ex-publican Andy Waller. A self-taught Commodore enthusiast and expert, Waller cut his teeth on Micronet's *Clubspot*. Within a relatively short time he outgrew the two hundred page format and Solely 64 was born.

The two biggest improvements that Solely 64 has generated are undoubtedly greater interaction and speedier updates. *Help-Line* aims to provide answers for 64 owners stuck with a programming or hardware problem and is a useful alternative to banging your head on the wall. Once you've uploaded the problem, Andy reckons to have the solution on-line within a couple of days. As well as having your own specific queries answered the Help-Line is a useful place to pick up general programming tips.

For gamers the *Hints and Tips* section provides a source of tactical advice for adventurers and stuff of a more general nature. These categories are not hard and fast, basically it's anything goes. If it's useful and informative, it gets to appear on screen. Naturally enough, if you are in possession of any such juicy snippets, Andy would appreciate a mailbox.

If you're thinking of buying a game, or have done so and have a strong opinion of it one way or the other, it might be worth



FEARGAL SHARKEY

Micronet's Celebrity Chatline, as the title suggests, has the equivalent of a phone-in each month — with a personality. Past luminaries have included William Powell, MP, who introduced the Copyright Amendment Act to counter piracy, and Dr Alex Reed, Chairman of Acorn. Last month the Micronet team pulled off their biggest coup. Feargal Sharkey solo pop singer, ex-Undertone and, more importantly, Micronet member and 64 owner was on-line to answer people's queries. Commodore User was there to record the event . . .

taking a look at *'Your Reviews'*. This is where 'you the public' get the chance to air your views on the latest software, hardware, anything with the word Commodore in it.

On the editorial side, those interested in such things (who isn't?) can catch up on the latest gossip and events, most Commodore related, some not. The turnaround time is quite fast, Andy updates it every day.

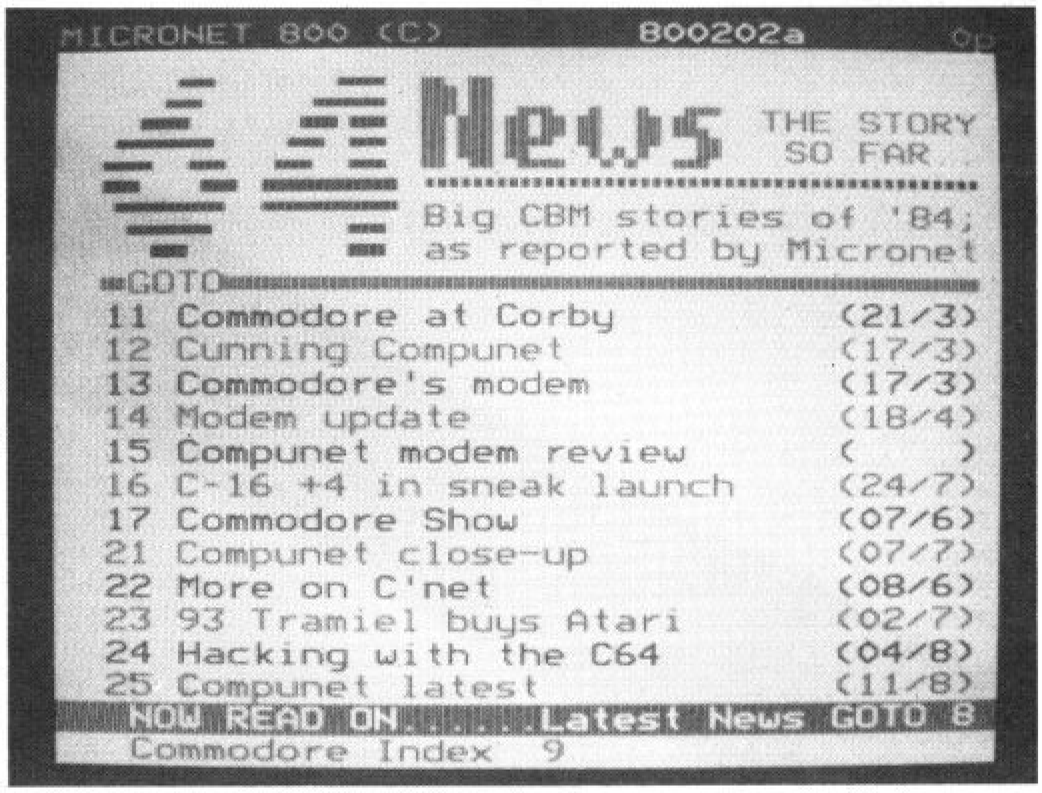
SOFTWARE

Software is available in two forms on Micronet. The most technologically advanced and, oddly enough, the most conventional method is *telesoftware*. Once you've decided on a program it is transmitted down the phone line on to your disk or cassette. The biggest advantage of this is that you can download software at any time, night or day.

Prices are also pretty competitive; Micronet reckon to offer a twenty percent discount on most of their software — the kind of stuff that is readily available in the shops. This seems only fair to me. You are supplying the disk or cassette and this makes for a big saving on suppliers' duplicating and distribution costs. Also, most of the games you'll find are no longer being stocked by dealers. It therefore seems reasonable to expect that discounts are given to the customer.

As well as the big name games such as *Blagger Goes to Hollywood, Black Hawk* and the Gilsoft adventures, Micronet are pursuing a policy of providing more utility software. Some of this will be sophisticated comms packages by people like *Y2 Computing*, for which you will have to pay the going rate. If you budget won't run to that, there is a wide selection of cheap and even free software available. The best bargain I managed to spot was British Telecom's *Dialsoft* user-to-user software at £1.50.

Most of the bargain basement stuff is sent to Micronet by little known companies or individuals. They're selective about what they put on the system so even at the cheaper end of the range quality should be high. If it's not, you can express your dissatisfaction by giving it a lousy vote. The wise buyer would check out other voters' opinions as well as any Micronet reviews on the software before taking the plunge.



More up-to-date news for 64 owners.

SOFTSHOP

Micronet also provide a mail-order software service. *Softshop* is the place to find the latest most popular games releases from people like *US Gold, Beyond* and *Ocean*. You tell Micronet what you want, give them your credit card number, and within two to three days it's in the post. If you're not a member of the plastic money brigade it takes a little longer, but you'll get the game when they get your cheque.

The reason you can't get these games down the phone line like the others is that the software houses licensing agreements forbid electronic transmission. Why?

Y HACKED!

"Are you nervous?", asks Micronet's Sid Smith as Feargal Sharkey saunters over to the terminal. "No, 'course not!" comes Feargal's lilting Derry reply. "Well you are going out to 10,000 people in a moment", says Sid.

I get the impression that Micronet aren't used to having someone quite so 'big' on their Chatline. A couple of days earlier Feargal went out live to four million people on the Late Late Breakfast Show. This is peanuts.

Not to say Feargal treats this as a chore. There are better ways to promote a single than on Micronet. No, he's into the whole thing. As the proud owner of a Macintosh, Tandy 100 and best of all a Commore 64, computers feature considerably in his life. He's an enthusiast and a serious member of Micronet, frequently to be found on-line when he has the time.

The first thing I learn from him, in fact, is that his mailbox is frequently 'hacked' by fans who leave all kind of messages even though he's X-Directory.

He's also a Commodore User reader. The picture is not a set-up. He had bought the mag that morning as soon as it hit the newstands. "I'm always tempted to enter the competitions, but I'm frightened someone will see my name and say 'what a cheapskate'". We wouldn't be so uncharitable.

We settle down to wait for the first queries to come through. It doesn't take long, Feargal is soon humming over the questions whilst Micronet's Sid hammers out the answers and sends them back. Feargal doesn't interfere with him, apart from interjecting to point out the odd spelling mistake that crops up. Not that is, until a message crops up on screen that he's sent from a terminal in another room during the frequent photo sessions that interrupt the evening.

The predictable single and video questions are in there, plus a few in jokes from members that Feargal has had previous contact with. A message asking about the Irish question appears. Feargal groans and it is passed over rapidly. "I don't mind talking about it", he says, but "I can't answer it — especially not in ten lines!"

Quite a few people are interested in Feargal's 64. What musical add-ons does he use? I'm interested as well. It turns out that the only one he uses seriously is Supersoft's Microvox Digital Sampler. In fact, it crops up on the B-side of his next single 'Someone for Somebody' otherwise he spends time composing on a £60,000 Fairlight.

What games does he play, though? "I'm not into games that much. I love Ariolasoft's *Aarchon*, I got it whilst I was in Los Angeles. I did try to buy *Elite*, but the shop refused to let me have it because my Access credit was over the limit!" I am hapy to report that a kindhearted Micronet member presented Feargal with a spare copy to take away with him.

Two hours later the questions are still coming down the line. Sid asks Feargal if he's tired yet, but no way is Feargal moving. He's happy in front of a monitor. Anyway he's only got to fly to Amsterdam tomorrow morning.

Mike Pattenden

Because in these days of ultra sophisticated marketing techniques the game is only half the product. If you can't sell it with the oversized box, free T-shirt, badge and pin-up poster, then you can't sell it at all.

THE NET WARS

The thousand odd Commodore subscribers to Micronet will no doubt be very pleased to see that things are at long last improving. But is Micronet doing enough to attract 64 owners not yet bitten by the comms bug?

A year ago, in this esteemed journal, I compared the relative advantages of Micronet and Compunet. At the time (as is still the case), they were the only two networks providing a service for 64 owners.

A year is a long time in communications, but some of the arguments remain the same. Here's some of the main areas of comparison.

- **Access speed:** Compunet is slow, there's no getting away from that fact. Even if you know where you're going it can take some time to find a page. If you don't, the often cumbersome directory structure slows things down even more. At least Micronet doesn't involve you in interminable waiting.
- **Software choice:** In terms of software there's little to choose between the two. But Micronet now has a better spread of games, but as far as utilities, business and educational software go I'd say Compunet still has the edge. How long that situation exists remains to be seen.
- **Information:** The crunch comes when you get to information. It used to be the case that Compunet was streets ahead. Micronet have always had the speed advantage, but in the past it has been wasted. It's all very well being able to pull up screen after screen of news in seconds, but not much use when that news is so old nobody is interested.

If Micronet's Publicity Manager Peter Probert is to be believed: "The emphasis of the Solely 64 area will be on information rather than software". As this has already begun to happen, I see no reason to doubt his words. As long as it continues in the same vein, Compunet will have a hard job keeping up.

Perhaps the biggest thing going for Solely 64 is that it is but a small part of Micronet which has to cater for eighteen thousand odd other members. This means you get access to information of a more general nature, as well as things like *Starnet* and *Chatline*.

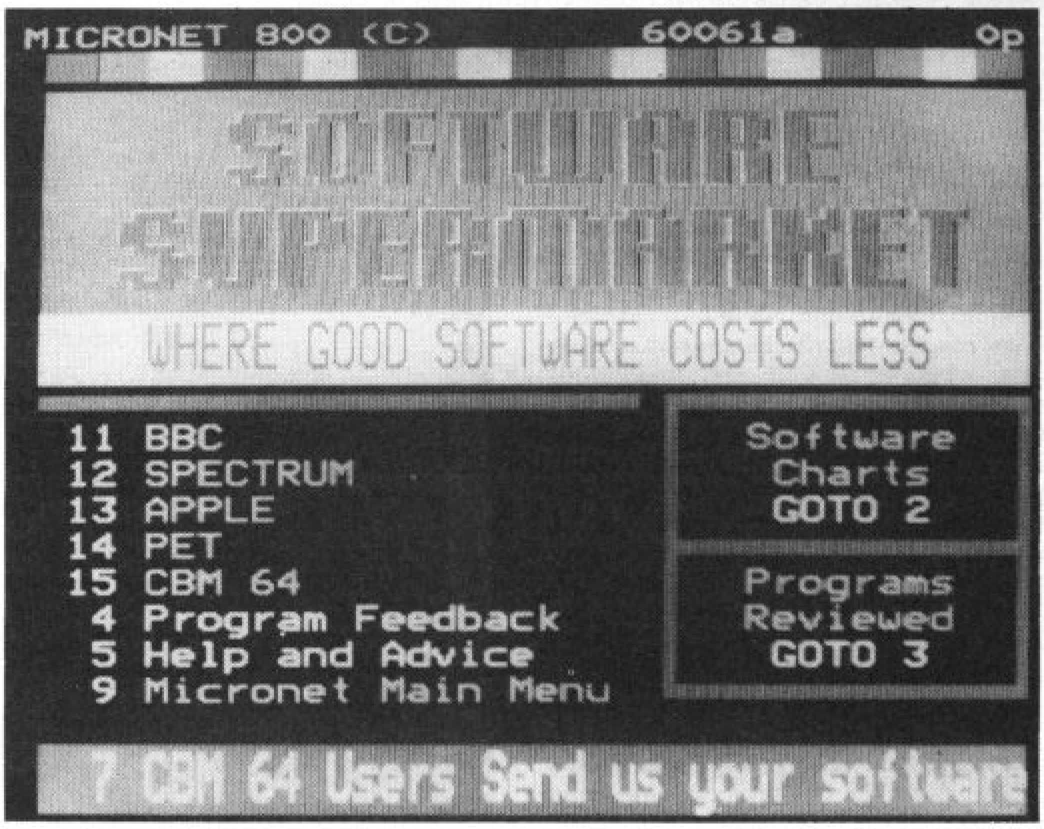
- **Multi-user gaming:** Starnet is to Micronet what MUD is to Compunet — their on-line multi-user game. Starnet has never been, and never will be (despite a planned facelift) as good as MUD. The latter has the drawback of being extortionately expensive as I know to my cost. Despite this, there are rumours that MUD will be making an appearance on Micronet by next spring.
- **Chit-chat:** *Chatline* is an on-line talking shop for Micronetters of all ilks. Topics of discussion vary from how to interface your micro with the hoover, to how to get rid of your acne. The biggest drawback of Chatline is that it often takes half an hour for your message to go on-line, which makes chatting a laborious process.

Soon to appear however, is *Mainframe Chatline* which will iron out the delays and make instant communication possible. Compunet has not been slow to pick up on the fact that people like to talk to each other and has just started its very own *Chat-On-Line* section in The Jungle.

CONCLUSIONS

I could go on forever, or at least for a very long time, describing what you get for your money on Micronet and Compunet and let you draw your own conclusions.

However, at the risk of making a few enemies, let me simply say this. Now that Micronet has at long last started to provide the kind of service that 64 owners deserve it puts Compunet well in the shade. Unless Compunet do something to tighten up their directory structure and speed up response times there won't be a comparison to make. □

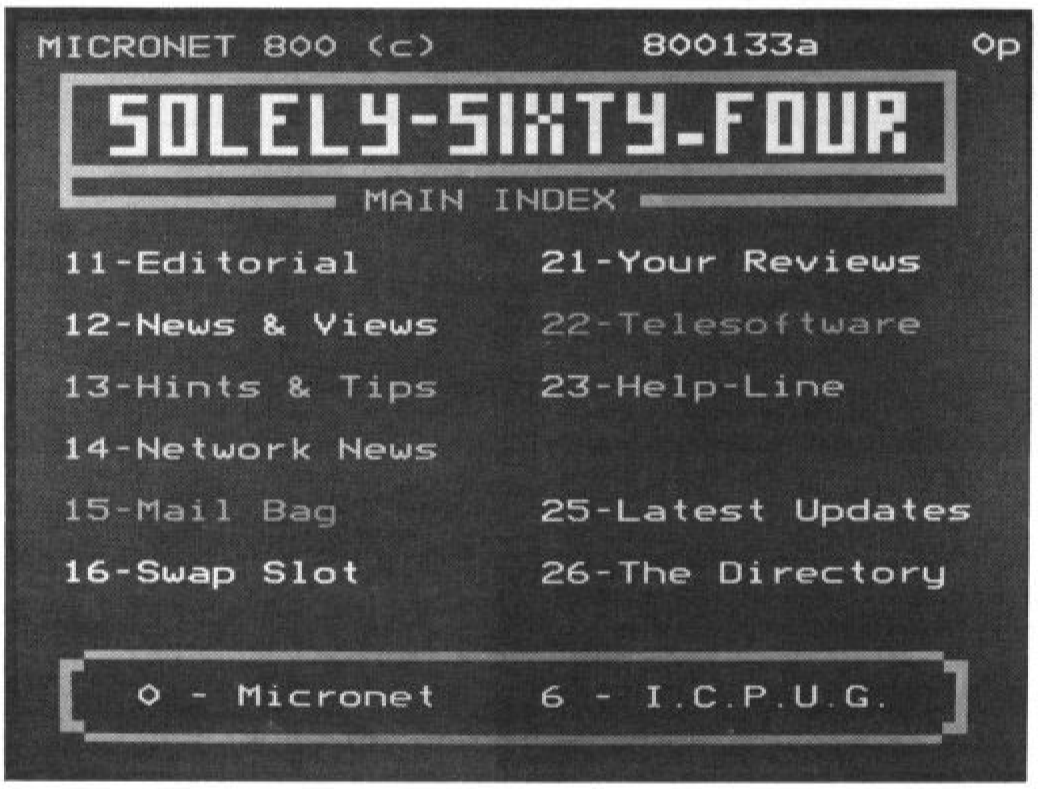


Buy some, get some free: 64 telesoftware on Micronet.

For more information:

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- Micronet
- Durant House
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Simple for the beginner
If you are a newcomer to word processing, Superscript's simple command menus put you immediately at ease.
Each command is a single word, and for each command there's an extra line of helpful description. To select a command, you simply move the cursor. You don't even have to type the command!
Once you are more familiar with Superscript, you can bypass the menus.

Powerful for the experienced user
Superscript also gives you the ability to *cut work down to a minimum* by storing your own command sequences or text on single keys. This means that with a single keystroke you can reproduce commonly used phrases or multi-line addresses from a glossary, load in document formats or execute a pre-programmed sequence of operations. *That's intelligence!*

Editing options
Superscript gives you all the editing options of a business-style word processor, with full block manipulation for cut-and-paste; overtype or text insertion modes; search and replace with pattern matching and optional case discrimination; backward search; case shifts for single words or larger blocks of text. *And much more.*

Good with numbers
Superscript allows you to extend your editing line up to 240 columns for wide documents like financial statements, and with decimal tabs it's easy to enter properly justified tables of numbers.
Superscript's complete set of calculator functions can be used interactively, or you can operate on numbers from the text of your document. Apart from the usual mathematical functions like add, subtract, multiply, divide, and percentages, you have the ability to add rows, columns or even whole tables.

Good with spelling, too
The built-in spelling checker goes right through your text, checking the unique words against its dictionaries, and stopping at each one it does not recognize. You have the option to correct the error, learn the new word or ignore it. Superscript has its own 30,000 word dictionary. In addition, it stores new words as it learns them.

Mailings with Superscript
Personalized mailings are easy with Superscript. You can enter the data manually or use data extracted from your spreadsheet or database. Merging can be selective with equal-to/not-equal-to logic. A mailing labels template is included to help you complete your mailing and you can alter the template to suit your own label format.

Attention Easy Script users!
If you're an Easy Script user, then Superscript is the obvious choice. With its enhanced features and more powerful facilities, you'll be able to do so much more. There are no compatibility problems either. You can run your Easy Script data or Easy Spell dictionary disks under Superscript.

LOADS INTO MEMORY TOGETHER

Superbase — The Programmable Database

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The first thing you'll notice about Superbase is the superb 230 page owner's manual.
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The hidden power –
As you become more familiar with Superbase, you'll want faster ways of accessing commands. One way is through the command line. Any sequence of menu options can also be typed directly onto the second line of the screen, known as the command line. *But this is just the beginning.*
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Supertype (Disk)	—	25.95	25.95	25.95	☐
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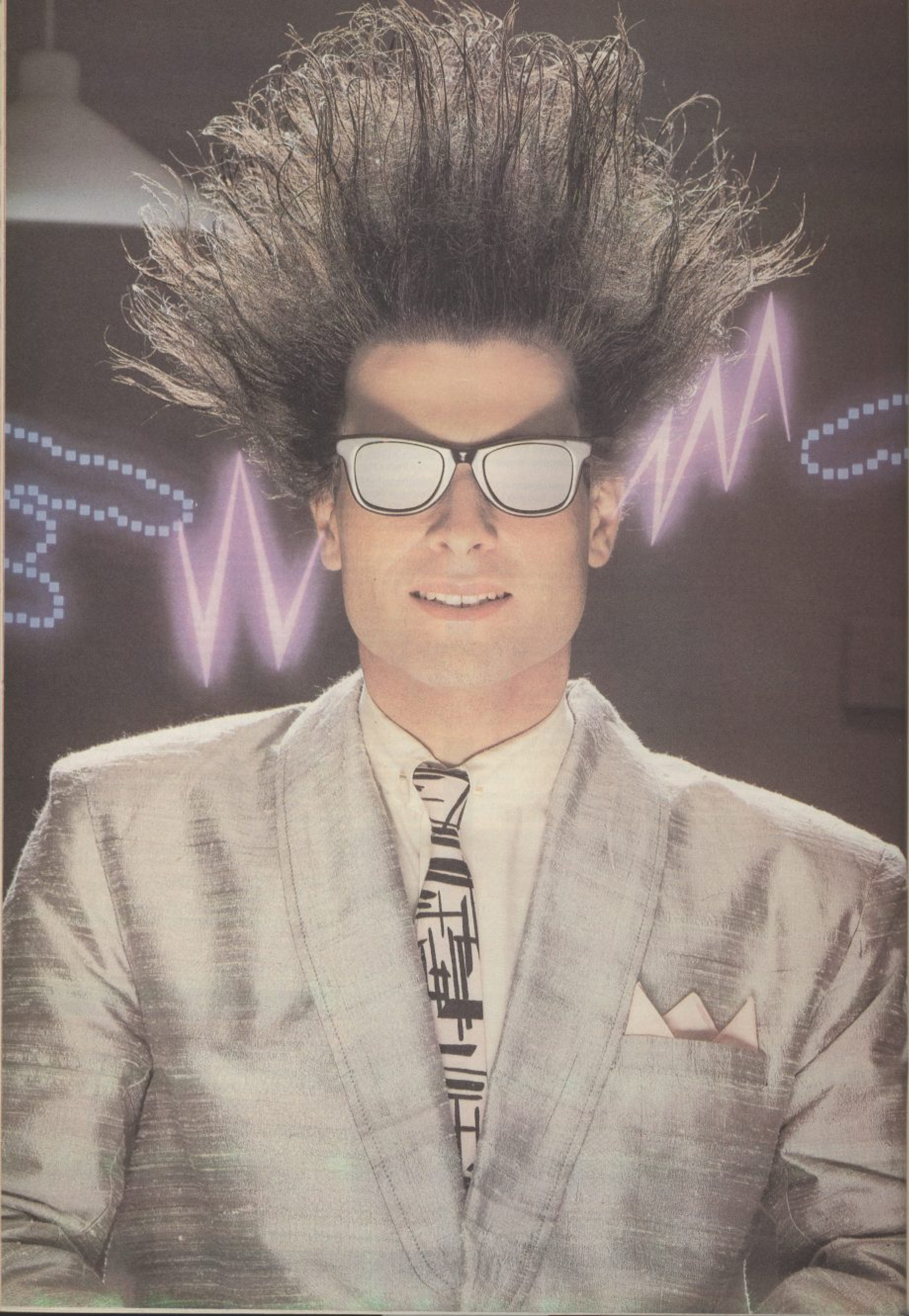
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Sprites for Pacman

***Dear Tommy*, I have a slight problem in using sprites when writing a pacman game on my 64. I need to check for the pacman (which is a sprite) to collide with the maze boundaries which is a UDG and check collision with pacman and dots. I would be very happy if you could solve my problem.**

There are two ways of doing this; one using interrupts and the other using PEEKs. The interrupt method involves setting the interrupt mask register (53274) and then testing the interrupt flag register (53273) when an interrupt occurs to see if it has been caused by a sprite collision.

The second method can be used from Basic and should be used after each move of a sprite. The following lines will check for collision between sprites and between sprites and data (UDGs):

IF ((PEEK(53278)AND(2 X)) THEN GOSUB (sprite collision routine)
IF ((PEEK(53279)AND(2 X)) THEN GOSUB (data collision routine)

Note that the test uses BOOLEAN logic (ie 0 or not 0) so there is no need for an equals sign in the expression (**X** is the sprite number (0-7) of the sprite you wish to test). There is not room for a worked example using interrupts, but if you want to go into this in detail there are a number of books available which cover the subject, such as Raeto West's excellent *Programming the 64*.

New ROM for old

***Dear Tommy*, I have a Commodore 64, 1540 disk drive (upgraded to 1541) and a Seikosha GP-100VC printer.**

My problem is that at times the printer 'hangs up' during a print run. When this happens I lose control of the keyboard and can only regain control by flicking the ON/OFF switch on the printer off then on by which I regain control but lose a line or two of printing.

This problem does not occur when printing out program listings but only when printing from within some software. I first noticed it with Wordcraft 40 and wrote to Audiogenic who were very helpful and tested the cartridge but could find no fault. Since then it has happened with CYB (Check Your Bank) and also with programs that I have entered myself.

It crossed my mind that the problem could be in the upgrade chip that I fitted into the 1540 but the problem is still there with the printer connected directly to the computer serial port.

One final point is the hang up will sometimes occur after a few lines of printing, sometimes after 20 or 30 lines and sometimes not at all.

Your problem is due to the ROM in the printer because of timing differences between the Vic-20 (for which this printer was designed) and the 64. In the same way that you had to fit a new ROM in the 1540 to make it compatible with the 64, so you need to fit a new ROM in the printer. The 64 thousand dollar question is whether you can actually get hold of a printer ROM at this stage; you can try having a word with your dealer.

If you can't get hold of one, then I am afraid there are only two ways round the problem; turn off the screen while printing, or sell the printer to someone with a Vic 20 and buy a new one. The first method is obviously cheaper, but will only work if you can actually alter the programs that suffer from the problem. The screen is turned on and off as follows:

POKE 53265,11 turns it off.
POKE 53265,27 turns it back on.



Tommy is our resident know-all. Whether you've got a technical problem on the 64, 16 or Vic, Tommy's at the ready with pearls of wisdom, advice and information. Go on, write to him: Tommy's Tips, Commodore User, 30-32 Farringdon Lane, London EC1R 3AU.

Two for the 16

***Dear Tommy*, About three weeks ago I was reading a computer magazine with an article about memory expansion for the C-16. Then as I own one I was interested in whether or not plus/4— only software would run on the C-16 with this expansion. It is made by Micro Component Trading Co. and sells for £59.95.**

Secondly I saw a book for Commodore Computers called Machine Code for CBM Computers retailing at £8.95. Looking through it I found no mention of the C-16 only Plus/4 is this because Plus/4 has a different type of machine code or is it compatible with the C-16?

To answer your first question, this rather depends on the software. If it is written in Basic then there is no reason why it will not work, provided there is enough memory for it, since both machines use the same version of Basic. On the other hand, a machine-code program may or may not run, depending on whether it uses features specific to the Plus/4. It is quite likely that programs that run on the C16 will work on the Plus/4, but unfortunately the reverse is not always the case. You may be able to try loading the program in the shop on a C16 before buying it, if you explain the reason to the dealer.

On your second query, the theory and methods of operation are the same for both machines, so learning machine-code from a book written for other Commodore machines should not be a problem. You may not be able to run all the example programs for the Plus/4 however, for the same reasons as above.

A couple of gremlins got loose in this column in the October issue. In the answer on Random Numbers ('It's not cricket'), the program line should have read **5 X = RND(—1)**. The second hiccup was in the 64 memory check routine (Test your chips); line 20 should have read:

20 FOR A = 2289 TO 40959

Apologies to anyone who had problems with those, I'll be keeping a can of DDT handy in future just in case the gremlins try to make a regular appearance!

Wacky Password

***Dear Tommy*, I must say that your part of the mag is the part I find most interesting, but less of the crawling and on to the question. I have a Commodore 64 and am wondering if it is possible to change the message on the powering-up screen so you could ask for a password before you could use the computer?**

You can't actually alter the power-up message unless you are using an auto-start cartridge. This is because the computer power-up message is incorporated in the ROM and will always appear before you can actually enter any program to change it. The only way you could achieve your aim of requesting a password before *any* use could be made of the computer would be to burn an EPROM containing the necessary code (plus the auto-start code of 195, 194, 205, 56, 48 starting at address 32772). The EPROM would then have to be mounted on a cartridge unit, addressed so that it started at 32768; the first two bytes being the jump address of the start of the actual program code.

Of course, the obvious answer to anyone who didn't know the password is to remove the cartridge before powering up, so you would also have to incorporate a check value within the cartridge which is accessed by the programs you wish to protect from being run by unauthorised users. The programs could then be set to crash if the cartridge was not present when they were run. However, this is obviously not feasible if you are talking about using commercial programs rather than ones you have written yourself.

If you are interested in making such a cartridge there are a number of suppliers of EPROM units for the 64, such as *Lightwave Leisure* on 051 639 5050, or *Zero Electronics* on 0493 842023. You can expect to pay around £60-£70 for everything you will need to get started though, so this might be a rather expensive and rather bizarre solution to your problem.

Looking at TED

***Dear Tommy*, I have been told that the C16 has a chip called 'TED', rather like the VIC chip in the Vic-20 and 64, but the manual makes no mention of it. What is this chip and what does it do? Can it be POKEd to like the VIC chip and if so what are the POKEs?**

You are quite correct; the C16 *does* have a chip called TED. Basically it controls the graphics display, sound generation, keyboard and a number of internal timers. It is rather a complex chip and not one that you can play around with lightly; at least not if you want your C16 to do something useful, since you won't actually damage it by POKEing around in it!

The 32 main registers start at $FF00 (65280) and finish at $FF1F (65311). There are also two registers at $FF3E and $FF3F; these are the ROM and RAM select respectively. The TED chip also uses some areas of memory; 2048-3071 is the colour attribute area and 3072-4095 is the area where the character pointers are held.

The following registers will probably be of most use to those who want to play around with interrupts etc:

65289—Interrupt Register bits 7-0 as follows: IRQ, T3, nc, T2, T1, 1LP, RAST, nc

(nc = no connection, T3 = TIMER3 etc, RAST = Raster Interrupt)

65290—Interrupt Enable Register; Bits 7-1 as above, Bit 0 is Raster MSB.

65291—Raster Compare Register (0-7) + 'bit 8' from 65290 bit 0 above.

65300—Video Matrix Base (bits 3-7)

As for PEEKs and POKEs, try these for starters:

65297—bits 0-3 Sound Volume
65297—bit 4 select Voice 2
65297—bit 5 select Voice 1
65294—Freq Sound 1
65298—bits 0-1 MSBs Freq Sound 1
65295—Freq Sound 2
65296—bits 0-1 MSBs Freq Sound 2

A very under-rated register is 65287. Try this little trick:

POKE 65287, PEEK (65287) OR 128.

Now print some characters and some graphics, using both the CBM key and the SHIFT key to obtain both sets of graphics. Now press CTRL/RVS ON and type some more character keys; you will now be in *lower case* mode, which means that you can have upper *and* lower case, plus both sets of graphics on screen at the same time! The TED chip is nothing if not versatile.

Raise the alarm

***Dear Tommy*, I have two questions to ask of you. First of all, could you give me a routine for the 64 that would enable me to produce an alarm and at the same time a countdown sequence? I have the listings of both in my program, as you can see from the listings included, but the trouble is that when the alarm goes off I can't get the timer to work as well to shut the program down after a certain time. Secondly, how do you make letters come up on the screen with a blip for each one produced, much the same as the instruction screens on *Ghostbusters*. I want to include this on an expense program I have written title screens for.**

The way to do it is to incorporate a time check within the main loop of the alarm program. Set up the timer variable using the jiffy clock (TI) plus the length of time you wish the alarm to sound for. Then check whether the jiffy clock has reached the value of the timer variable and if it has then return from the alarm subroutine. The following two lines of code will need to be inserted; the first *before* the alarm routine is called, and the second *inside* the main loop of the alarm routine:

TV = TI + (LN*60) where LN is the length of time in seconds.

IF TI> = TV THEN POKE VL,0: RETURN where VL is the volume register (to turn off the alarm sound). You may, of course, wish to do something more fancy to shut down, but that is easily incorporated with a GOSUB to a shutdown routine. On your second query, the following short program gives an example of how to sound a note for each character printed from a string:

```
10 GOSUB 2000:REM
INITIALISATION
20 FOR L = 1 TO 9
30 PRINTMID$(A$,L,1);
40 GOSUB 1000
50 NEXT L
60 END
1000 POKE BASE + 4,65
1010 FORDL = 1TODR:NEXTDL
1020 POKE BASE + 4,64: RETURN
2000 A$ = "COMMODORE"
2010 BASE = 54272
2020 POKE BASE,154: POKE
BASE + 1,27
2030 A = 2: D = 2: S = 0: DR = 50
2040 POKE BASE + 5,16*A + D
2050 POKE BASE + 6,16*S + D
2060 POKE BASE + 4,64
2070 POKE54296,10
2080 POKE BASE + 2,160
2090 POKE BASE + 3,8
2100 RETURN
```

Alter the speed at which the characters are printed by changing the value of the delay variable **DR** in line 2030.

16 printer problem

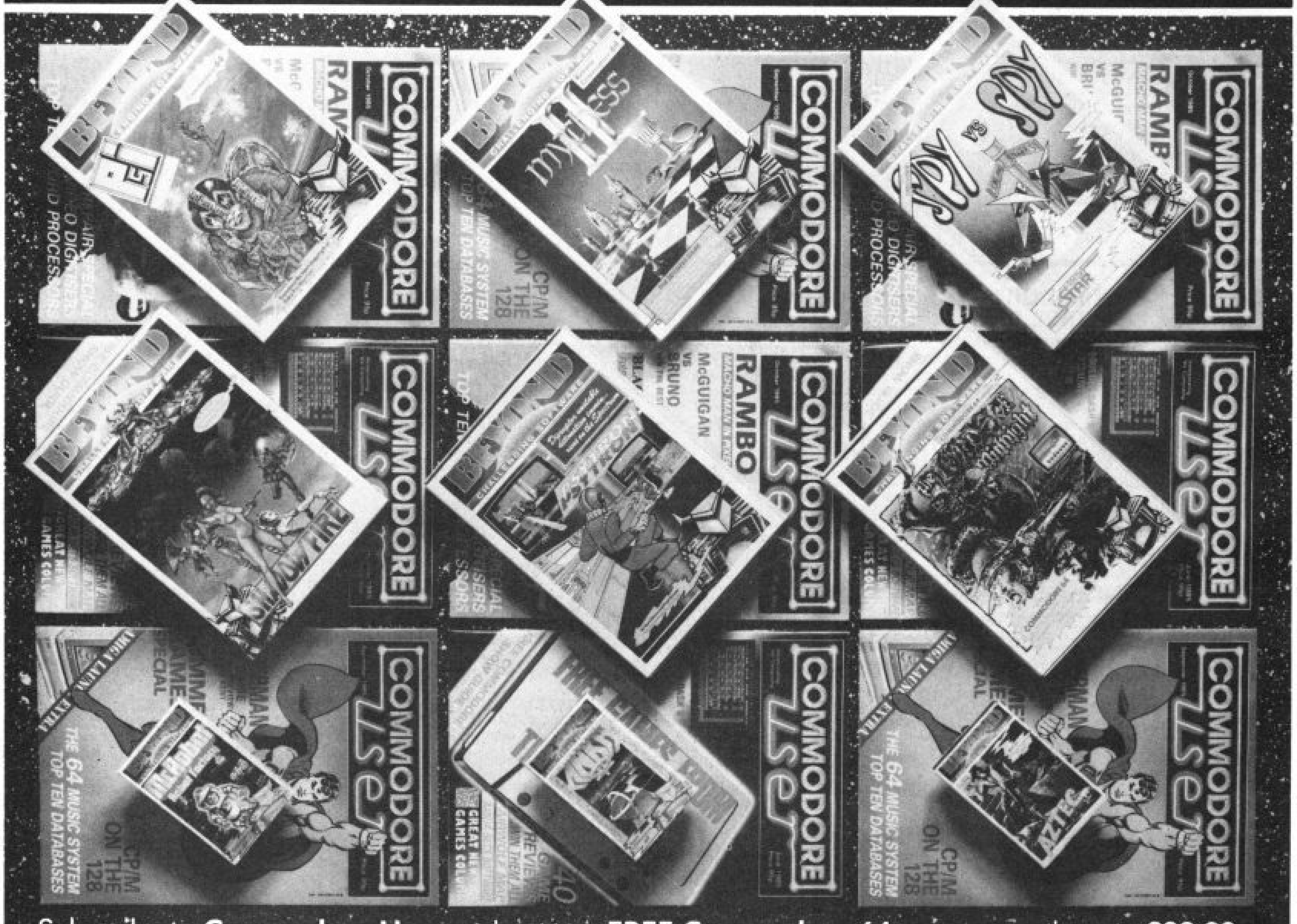
***Dear Tommy*, I am a Commodore C16 owner, and I recently purchased an MPS-801 printer. In the User's Manual (page 39) is a short program to print a hard copy from the screen. But this program is only compatible for the Vic-20 and 64. Could you please tell me what lines I need to add or delete? Could you also tell me if there is a way of dumping a copy of chess diagrams from a Pro-Program to the printer?**

There are three lines that need to be altered to enable the program to be run on the C16. In line **60030** change **PEEK (648)*256** to **PEEK (1342)*256**. In line **60060** change the **22** to **40** inside the brackets. Finally, line **60050** should be altered as for the 64 (shown at the bottom of the page in the manual).

However, there is also a mistake in the program: line **60100** should read **60010 AS$ = AS$ + QT$ + RO$** and not as printed in the manual. Note that this program will only dump a lo-res screen (text and graphics characters) and will not work for hi-res dumps.

As for the chess program it would have to be a machine-code dump routine; the difficulty being in halting the chess program so that you could activate the dump code, without spoiling the screen. Without detailed knowledge of the chess program routines and how they are stored in memory I'm afraid it is not possible to give a generalised dump program.

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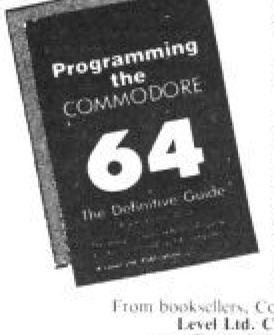
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